

Vision problems can come with age

It's a fact of life that eyes change with age. Despite the many Americans affected by these changes, a new survey from the American Optometric Association (AOA) shows a lack of public knowledge and misunderstanding regarding age-related eye diseases and conditions.



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According to the AOA's American Eye-Q survey, which assesses public knowledge and understanding of issues related to eye and visual health, only 18 percent of Americans know that macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in adults 65 years of age

and older, and less than a quarter of all Americans understand the effects of glaucoma. Even more concerning, 89 percent of Americans incorrectly believe that glaucoma is preventable, when in fact it is only treatable if caught early.

Americans who are 40 years of age or older have probably noticed changes in vision. Difficulties seeing clearly for reading and close work are among the most common problems adults develop between the ages of 41 to 60. According to the survey, top concerns about the effects of vision problems include not being able to live independently, not being able to see loved ones, not being able to read and losing the ability to drive. When left undetected and untreated, many age-related eye diseases can damage your vision permanently. The good news is that most people can preserve their vision with proper treatment, so the key is early detection.

VISION DISORDERS

■ Age-related macular degeneration is an eye disease that causes loss of central vision. Activities like reading, driving, watching TV and recognizing faces all require clear central vision.

■ Diabetic retinopathy occurs in people with diabetes and causes progressive damage to the retina, the light-sensitive lining at the back of the eye. If left untreated, it can cause blindness.

■ Cataracts are a cloudy or opaque area in the clear lens of the eye. Usually cataracts develop in both eyes, but one may be worse than the other. Cataracts can cause a decrease in contrast sensitivity, a dulling of colors and increased sensitivity to glare.

■ Glaucoma covers a group of eye diseases characterized by damage to the optic nerve resulting in peripheral vision loss. People at higher risk of developing glaucoma include those with a family history of the disease, older adults, African-Americans and Hispanics.

■ Dry eye is characterized by an insufficient amount of tears or a poor quality of tears to lubricate and nourish the eye. Tears contribute to clear vision and the health of the front surface of the eye.

■ Retinal detachment is a tearing or separation of the retina from the underlying tissue. This can be caused by trauma to the eye or head, health problems due to advanced diabetes, and inflammatory disorders of the eye.

The good news is that visiting an eye doctor on a regular basis for comprehensive eye exams can help reduce the risk of developing age-related vision problems.

Some common warning signs of age-related vision problems include fluctuating vision, seeing floaters or flashes of light, loss of side vision and seeing distorted images. However, often patients with eye diseases do not have recognizable symptoms until the conditions are advanced, so regular comprehensive eye exams are essential for baby boomers and seniors.



Metro Creative Graphics

SUDDEN CARDIAC arrest and heart attacks are essentially an "electrical vs. plumbing" problem.

Sudden Cardiac Arrest often misunderstood by Americans

According to research from the Heart Rhythm Society, more than 70 percent of Americans believe sudden cardiac arrest, SCA, is a type of heart attack. It's like comparing apples and oranges. The common misunderstanding between SCA and a heart attack can lead people to overlook important risk factors that contribute to SCA.

So what is the difference? In basic terms, SCA is an electrical malfunction of the heart, while a heart attack is a blockage in the blood vessels interrupting the flow of blood to the heart — essentially an "electrical vs. plumbing" problem. Knowing the difference could help save thousands of lives each year.

Unfortunately, not only is SCA misunderstood, it's severely underestimated. SCA is a leading cause of death in the United States, taking more than 250,000 lives each year. Unknown by many, SCA claims more lives annually than breast cancer, lung cancer or AIDS.

In an effort to raise awareness about SCA and promote better heart health, the Heart Rhythm Society, an organization representing specialized clinicians trained to treat heart rhythm disorders, has launched a multi-year campaign aimed at helping individuals identify risk factors, understand how to properly respond and how to effectively prevent and treat SCA.

Chief among its priorities, the Heart Rhythm Society hopes to help people better understand SCA, and is working to eliminate

the confusion between SCA and a heart attack.

"Sudden cardiac arrest is a serious health issue. Unfortunately, the public knows little about SCA, such as whom it affects and what can be done to prevent it," says Richard L. Page, MD, FHRS, president of the Heart Rhythm Society.

"The Heart Rhythm Society would like to encourage all Americans to learn more about SCA by becoming aware of preventative and responsive techniques that will ultimately save lives."

The Heart Rhythm Society offers the following tips and advice.

WHO'S AT RISK

The following risk factors may indicate an increased risk of SCA

- Previous heart attack.
- Family history of sudden death, heart failure or heart attack.
- Abnormal heart rate or rhythm.

- Unusually rapid heart rate that comes and goes.
- Episodes of fainting.
- Low Ejection Fraction (less than 35 percent) - a measurement of how much blood is pumped by the ventricles with each heart beat.

HOW TO RESPOND

Time is critical. The Heart Rhythm Society advises the following swift actions in response to SCA:

- Know the signs of SCA — victims will fall to the ground, become unresponsive and will not breathe normally, if at all.
- Call 911.
- Administer CPR — hands-only CPR is proven to be just as effective.
- Use an automated external defibrillator (AED) if one is available.

PREVENTION

The Heart Rhythm Society offers the following advice to decrease the likelihood of SCA

- Live a healthy lifestyle.
- Know your family history.
- Know your risk of heart failure.
- Treat and monitor health conditions that can contribute to heart problems, including high blood pressure, cholesterol, and smoking.
- Seek professional guidance to control or stop an abnormal heart rhythm.

For more information please visit www.HRSONline.org.

—Family Features and The Heart Rhythm Society

Report says U.S. fails to fight high blood pressure

By LAURAN NEERGAARD
AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON — A critical new report declares high blood pressure in the U.S. to be a neglected disease — a term that usually describes mysterious tropical illnesses, not a well-known plague of rich countries.

The prestigious Institute of Medicine said Monday that even though nearly one in three adults has hypertension, and it's on the rise, fighting it apparently has fallen out of fashion: Doctors too often don't treat it aggressively, and the government hasn't made it enough of a priority, either.

Yet high blood pressure, the nation's second-leading cause of death, is relatively simple to prevent and treat, the institute said.

"There's that incredible disconnect," said Dr. David Fleming, Seattle-King County's public health director and chairman of the IOM committee that examined how to trim the toll.

"In our country, if you live long enough, you're almost guaranteed to get hypertension, so this is something we should all be concerned about," added report co-author Dr. Corinne Husten of the nonprofit Partnership for Prevention.

This is not rocket science, the report makes clear: Cut the salt. Eat more potassium. Get some exercise. Drop 10 pounds. Those steps could make a big difference in how many people suffer high blood pressure — 73 million at last count. Another 59 million are on the brink, with blood pressure hovering at levels officially deemed pre-hypertension.

So the institute urged the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to push doctors to better treat hypertension, and to work with communities to make it easier for people to live the healthy lifestyles that can prevent it.

Hypertension competed with other disorders for the \$54 million that CDC spent on heart disease and stroke prevention last year, while it cost the health care system at least \$73 billion, the institute noted.

High blood pressure is sinister because it's silent. People seldom notice symptoms until their organs already have been damaged. Hypertension triggers more than one-third of heart attacks, is a leading cause of strokes and kidney failure, and plays a role in blindness and even dementia.

Normal blood pressure is measured at less than 120 over 80. Anyone can get high blood pressure, a level of 140 over 90 or more. But leading risk factors are getting older, being overweight and inactive, and having a poor diet.

AMONG THE FINDINGS

■ Too many doctors ignore hypertension if only the top number in a blood pressure reading — the systolic pressure — is high. That's contrary to treatment guidelines.

■ Too little potassium and too much sodium fuel high blood pressure, and only 2 percent of adults eat enough potassium, which is found in fruits and vegetables.

■ CDC should work with food makers to lower the sodium hidden inside processed foods, our main source of sodium. The average adult is thought to eat about 3,400 milligrams of sodium a day; the recommended daily limit is 2,300 mg.

■ If everyone who is overweight lost 10 pounds, the nation's hypertension cases could drop 8 percent.

■ The government should work with insurers to reduce or eliminate copayments for blood pressure medications, and with drug companies to simplify patient-assistance programs for the poor.

The Institute of Medicine is part of the National Academies, an independent organization chartered by Congress to advise the government on scientific matters.

BRIEFS

■ **An Overview of Services** session will be offered from 1 to 2 p.m. March 17 in the large conference room at the Career-Link Building, 300 Indian Springs Road, White Township. Staff from Child Care Information Services and Hopeful Hearts will share information on their programs.

This session is free. The Overview of Services sessions are planned to provide new and "seasoned" agency staff with general information on services offered and resources available to staff and clients of our county.

RSVP by noon March 10 to (724) 463-8207, ext. 17, or to icdhsinfo@comcast.net.

■ **ABC's of Baby-sitting** is a class offered at IRMC as a two-day program for boys and girls 12 and older. Students will learn how to prepare for an interview for a baby-sitting job, keep a journal, and how to feed, entertain and care for an infant, toddler, preschooler and school-age child. Students will also learn first aid for emergencies, how to activate emergency services, do CPR and care for a choking victim. Cost is \$50. The next classes are from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. March 20 and 27. For more information or cost, call (724)357-7075.

■ **All About Baby** is a three-hour workshop that focuses on getting to know your baby, along with visits to the doctor, immunizations, bath time, fussiness, safety, child care and infant nutrition. For more information, call IRMC at (724) 357-8088.

■ **Breastfeeding is Best** teaches about feeding baby and pumping and storing breast milk from 9 to noon Saturday at IRMC Outpatient Building. Registration is required. For information, call (724) 357-8088.

■ **Clear the Air** is a one-session program that can give you the tools you need to get prepared, take action, stay motivated and quit smoking for good. For more information, call IRMC at (724) 357-8088.

■ **Cyber CPR** is a new way to learn adult CPR and first aid through the American Red Cross. Participants are issued a user name and password and a link to the training Web site. They are then able to take the knowledge portion of the course online at their own pace. The CPR and first aid skills are then tested in the classroom with an instructor. The online portion must be completed before attending the skills session. For more information or to register, call the Indiana chapter at (724) 465-5678 or e-mail bburns@iccarc.org.

■ **Discover Relaxation With In** is a four-week lifestyle improvement program identifying everyday stressors and specific techniques to evoke relaxation. The program also includes ways to reduce and manage stress. The next class is at 6:30 p.m. Thursday. For more information, call IRMC at (724) 357-8088.

■ **Early Pregnancy** focuses on a healthy pregnancy, lifestyles and what to expect with physical and emotional changes, doctor visits and diagnostic testing. The free class is at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at IRMC.

For information, call (724) 357-8088.

■ **Healthy Moves** is a supervised, structured exercise program for inactive adults or those at risk for health problems. Adults who wish to improve their fitness level can attend. For information, call IRMC at (724) 357-8088.

■ **HOPE** is a six-week lifestyle management program focusing on how to have stronger bones to live a longer, healthier life. The program provides an overview of osteoporosis, education on healthy nutrition, physical exercise, medication options, stress management and more. The next session starts Wednesday. Call IRMC at (724) 357-8088.

■ **Infant Massage** is a three-part series for moms, dads, babies and toddlers. Infant massage gives parents an introduction to the benefits of massage for baby and an opportunity to try some of the techniques that can be used. The class is \$20.

To register or for more information, call IRMC at (724) 357-7075.

■ **Logistics: Disaster Preparedness Training** is a study of providing support services for a disaster relief operation, including transportation, facilities and supplies through American Red Cross.

For more information, call the Indiana Chapter at (724) 465-5678.

■ **Managing Your Diabetes**, Indiana Regional Medical Center, (724) 357-8088. Call for information.

■ **Painting Classes** are offered at the Indiana Social Center, 1001 Oak St., Indiana, for people age 60 and older. Registration is required. Classes are held the first and third Mondays of the month at 10 a.m. with instructor Betty Gattuso. For more information or to register, call (724) 465-2697.

■ **Pet First Aid**, American Red Cross, Indiana Chapter (724) 465-5678.

■ **Strong Women Strong Bones** is a 10-week strength-training course to help manage osteoporosis. The program includes a pre- and post-assessment and two days of strength training each week. For information, call IRMC at (724) 357-8088.

■ **Yoga for Health** shows how yoga is suitable for most adults because of the non-strenuous nature and how it can be useful to help relieve symptoms associated with some conditions, such as cancer, arthritis and heart disease. Classes meet at 10:30 a.m. Mondays and Wednesdays at IRMC. For information, call (724) 357-8088.

■ **Community Disability Awareness Workgroup** will meet from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. Monday at The Arc of Indiana County. The group is comprised of community members working together to share information so people with and without disabilities get to know each other better and thus make our community a better place for everyone. For more information, call (724) 349-8230.

■ **Parent Transition Group** will meet from 10 a.m. to noon Monday at The Arc of Indiana County. The group has established a network for families of children with disabilities who are making the transition from high school to post-secondary education, employment and community living. All parents of children with disabilities are encouraged to attend. Lunch is provided. For more information or to register, call (724) 349-8230.

■ **Safe Kids** will meet at 8 a.m. Wednesday at Eat'N Park. For information, call Betty Austin at (724) 349-6200.

Home Health Answers

Presented by
Linda Bettinazzi
President/CEO

HOME HEALTHCARE AIDES

Home healthcare aides assist seniors who live in their own homes. They are trained to provide routine personal care services and also perform basic housekeeping tasks. Home healthcare aides are a great help to seniors who require more extensive care than family and friends can provide. They can help the senior get in and out of bed, bathe, dress, and groom. They also provide valuable companionship. Under the direction of nursing or medical staff, home health aides may assist with medical equipment and change nonsterile dressings. Depending upon the needs of the senior at home, a home healthcare service can help you choose the appropriate home healthcare aide to assist your loved one.

Home health aides can enrich the lives of elderly family members. Our personnel know the healing quality of being in the familiar surroundings of your own home. Our VNA Extended Home Care employees are bonded, insured, professionally trained and RN supervised. To learn more, visit our website or call us, 724-463-1102. We are located in the Medical Arts Building at 850 Hospital Road, Indiana, PA. We are available to assist our patients and families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Home healthcare aides help make it possible for seniors to continue living where they are most comfortable — in their homes.

Compassionate care right at home.

VNA Visiting Nurse Association OF INDIANA COUNTY
Compassionate Care Right At Home
www.vnaindianacounty.com

Your
HEALTH TIP

Bottled-Up Anger Bad for Heart

Researchers followed about 2,800 men and found that men who stifled their anger about being unfairly treated by fellow workers or supervisors were two to five times more likely to develop heart disease than those who were more confrontational. Those who had a heart attack or died from heart disease were described as "covertly coping" with unfair treatment at work. They let things pass without saying anything and just swallowed their feelings. Their more outspoken counterparts exhibited "open coping" behavior when mistreated. They talked with the person right away or after things had calmed down and expressed their emotions.

By Rob Kasisky, R.P.H.

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