

## FOR YOUR HEALTH

## Protect yourself from heart disease

By Dr. Edward Yoon

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the U.S. You can limit your risk by living a healthy lifestyle and paying attention to potential symptoms of heart trouble.

More than 400,000 people in our country will die suddenly this year, many of them from cardiovascular issues. Some of those people may have been able to prevent or reverse their conditions with healthy habits.

## Common conditions

Heart failure, stroke and heart attack are conditions that fall under the umbrella of heart disease.

A heart attack occurs after muscle cells die or are injured when blood flow to the heart is suddenly reduced. If a large area of muscle is damaged, it can lead to heart failure.

Heart failure occurs when the heart is damaged and can no longer pump effectively -- often after a heart attack. The primary symptoms of this condition are fatigue and shortness of breath.

Stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is suddenly and severely reduced. This is often caused when plaque buildup in a blood vessel breaks off and blocks the flow of blood. Signs of stroke include vision loss, weakness in a leg or arm, and slurred speech.

## Risk factors and prevention

Not everyone who experiences heart disease will have classic risk factors -- such as being overweight or having high blood pressure. That makes it even more

important to be aware of heart disease symptoms and to be aggressive when you suspect something may be wrong.

Keep alert for signs of heart disease if any immediate family members have suffered heart problems, especially at a young age. This includes men under age 55 and women under age 65.

Keys to good heart health include routine blood pressure and cholesterol checks and maintaining a healthy weight to reduce the amount of stress on your heart.

Following a healthy diet and exercising regularly can help with your weight. A Mediterranean-style diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables and good fats from nuts, olives and fish is one of the best things you can do for your heart.

You should also exercise continuously for 20 to 30 minutes a day. Talk with your doctor about activities that can safely get your cardiovascular system going.

## Help reduce your risk

Sutter Regional Medical Foundation is offering a free community lecture 6:30 p.m. March 2 at 2700 Lowe Court, Fairfield.

The event will feature health information and special giveaways.

To reserve a seat, or request a free Healthy Hearts brochure, call 428-2747 or e-mail longorj2@sutterhealth.org.

*Edward Yoon, M.D., is a board certified cardiologist with Sutter Regional Medical Foundation and on staff at Sutter Solano Medical Center, which is a member of the Solano Coalition for Better Health.*



The Associated Press

The U.S. Preventative Services Task Force released a report that recommends intensive behavior treatment for obese children.

## Task force: Screen kids, obesity treatment works

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — An influential advisory panel says school-aged youngsters and teens should be screened for obesity and sent to intensive behavior treatment if they need to lose weight -- a move that could transform how doctors deal with overweight children.

Treating obese kids can help them lose weight, the panel of doctors said in issuing new guidelines. But that's only if it involves rigorous diet, activity and behavior counseling.

Just five years ago, the same panel -- the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force -- found few benefits from pediatric obesity programs. Since then, the task force said, studies have shown success. But that has only come with treatment that is costly, hard to find and hard to follow.

The good news is, "you don't have to throw your arms up and say you can't do anything," said task force chairman Dr. Ned Calonge. "This is a recommendation that says there are things that work."

Calonge said the panel recognizes that most pediatricians are not equipped to offer the necessary kind of treatment, and that it may be hard to find, or afford, places that do. The recommendations merely highlight scien-

tific evidence showing what type of programs work -- "not whether or not those services are currently available," he said.

The new advice, published online in the journal Pediatrics, could serve as a template for creating obesity programs. It also might remove one important cost barrier: Calonge said insurers will no longer be able to argue that they won't provide coverage because treatment programs don't work.

Evidence the panel evaluated shows intensive treatment can help children lose several pounds -- enough for obese kids to drop into the "overweight" category, making them less prone to diabetes and other health problems. The treatment requires appointments at least once or twice a week for six months or more.

The recommendations follow government reports last week that showed obesity rates in kids and adults have held steady for about five years. Almost one-third of kids are at least overweight; about 17 percent are obese.

The task force is the same group of government-appointed but independent experts whose new mammogram advice startled many women in November. That guidance -- that most women don't need routine

mammograms until age 50 -- is at odds with the American Cancer Society and several doctor groups.

In this case, the task force advice mirrors that of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Many pediatricians already measure their young patients' height, weight and body mass index at yearly checkups.

Task force recommendations in 2005 said there wasn't enough evidence to encourage routine obesity screening and treatment. The update is based on a review of 20 studies, most published since 2005, involving more than 1,000 children.

The review excluded studies on obesity surgery, which is only done in extreme cases.

The panel stopped short of recommending two diet drugs approved for use in older children, Xenical and Meridia, because of potential side effects including elevated heart rate, and no evidence that they result in lasting weight loss.

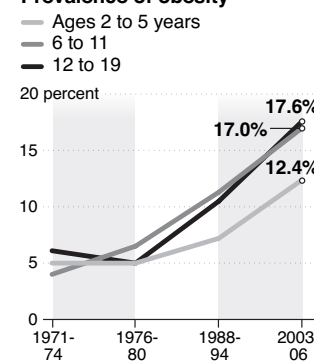
Calonge, chief medical officer for Colorado's public health department, said evidence is lacking on effective treatment for very young children, so the recommendations apply to ages 6 to 18.

The most effective treatment often involves counseling parents along with kids, group therapy and other

## A growing concern

The prevalence rate of obesity among America's youth has nearly tripled in some age groups since the 1970s, according to a survey.

## Prevalence of obesity



SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

programs that some insurers won't cover. But adequate reimbursement "would be critical" to implementing these programs, Dr. Sandra Hassink, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics' board of directors, said in a Pediatrics editorial.

Dr. Helen Binns, who runs a nutrition clinic at Chicago's Children's Memorial Hospital, says such programs are scarce partly because they're so costly. Her own hospital -- a large institution in one of Chicago's wealthiest neighborhoods -- doesn't have one.

Many families with obese or overweight children can't afford that type of treatment. And it's not just cost. Many aren't willing to make the necessary lifestyle changes, she said.

"It requires a big commitment factor on the part of the parent, because they need to want to change themselves, and change family behavior," Binns said.

## Horoscopes by Holiday Mathis

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19). Enjoy the simple pleasures of normal life. So what if they smack of conventionality? When nothing unusual happens, this is a blessing. You'll relax into a normal routine, and the comfort you find there is healing.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20). Your inner world needs attention, which you can only give once you shut the door on the outside world. You will do well to address your personal concerns while they are small.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 21). You are at liberty to spend your time however you want to spend it. It feels perfectly lovely to go about your day with an air of non-chalance. There is nowhere you have to be. You are free.

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22). Everyone you meet will treat you in the gracious manner you prefer. This has something to do with the compassionate smile you are wearing, even when there is nothing in particular to smile about.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22). You will think of several ways to make your life easier, all of them worthy of implementation. Make a list, decide which are the best ideas, and then tackle the top three. You make astounding progress in the course of a day.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Investigate support groups. Not because you need anything in particular, but because you deserve to be cared for and listened to in the manner you so generously provide for others.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Someone is keeping track of your comings and goings. It's nice to know that others are watching out for you, although perhaps it's a little annoying to have to answer for yourself so often.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You will perform a skill that will have everyone amazed. Your ability to do so seems like no big deal to

## Today's birthday

You may feel like you've been yanked around by life's circumstances recently, but now that all changes. Every cell in your being realizes that you're in charge. You decide where you're going, and others help to make sure you get there. June brings a teacher. With great discipline, a goal will be reached in August. Gemini and Virgo people adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 20, 14, 33, 4 and 17.

you. It's not hard when you know what to do. But figuring that out takes years of practice.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Guard your private life, and protect your schedule. If you let it, life will come crowding in. A mundane act such as opening your e-mail has the potential to take you down a joyless and time-consuming path.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You're in just the mood to handle the sticky parts of life. Honesty is your ticket. And you're bold enough to say what's on your mind without flinching or bending to the expectations of others.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You want to feast your eyes on something spectacular and rare. You can't be blamed for wanting to experience beauty, and your desire alone might be enough to make it happen.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20). You'll spend time with someone who highlights your soulfulness. Together, you'll tumble into precious moments of deep seriousness and then rise out of them just as easily with hearts as light as helium.

## ANNIE'S MAILBOX

## Since I remarried, my daughter won't see me

**Dear Annie:** After 30 years of a turbulent marriage, my ex-wife and I had an amicable divorce. Before the ink was dry, she remarried. I later married a beautiful young woman. My daughter, who is 10 years older than my new wife, became quite upset over this, and our relationship quickly deteriorated.

Eventually, my daughter wrote to say she didn't know me anymore and already had a dad (meaning my ex's new husband). My lovely wife is terribly upset because she fears it's her fault -- that she came between my daughter and me. I believe this is the exact reaction my daughter is hoping for -- to make my wife feel guilty.

I do not have my daughter's current address or phone number, although I could probably find it if need be. I am upset about the situation, but if she really no longer wants me in her life, I don't want to push it. Any advice? — C.C.

**Dear C.C.:** Your daughter is testing you, and although she is behaving selfishly and childishly, please don't throw in the towel. It will only confirm her worst

fear -- that you no longer need her in your life because you've replaced her with your new, younger wife. If you are on good terms with your ex, please discuss it with her and suggest she help your daughter accept your marriage. Also continue to stay in touch with your daughter and tell her you love her, regardless of her response. Time can heal this if you don't give up.

**Dear Annie:** My younger brother is married with three kids. The problem is, he and his wife expect my parents to pick up their kids and spend time with them frequently. They become angry when my parents aren't able to do this as often as they'd like.

Annie, my parents have 23 grandchildren. For them to spend that kind of time with each of them would be impossible. They always offer to baby-sit when my brother and his wife go out. They never miss a birthday or Christmas. But my sister-in-law says if my parents don't start being "doting grandparents," they will be written off.

When we were kids, my grandparents did not spend

tons of time with us for the same reasons my parents don't. My parents are beside themselves because they really do love all of their grandchildren and are fair to each of them. Whatever happened to children respecting their parents? What can we do? — Concerned Sister

**Dear Concerned:** Some parents think the world begins and ends with their children. When your parents say they are busy, or that they need to spend time with the other grandchildren, your brother and his wife become offended and angry. Your siblings who have children might try talking to your brother. Perhaps they can help him understand that he should accept his parents as they are and encourage a closer relationship instead of making threats. Keeping the grandparents away hurts his children, too.

**Dear Annie:** I think you missed on your response to "Don't Want To Go," the sibling whose sisters scheduled a birthday party for their 90-year-old mother in Florida on Christmas Eve.

It is unreasonable to expect other families to put

aside their holiday plans and spend thousands to travel at the most expensive time of the year. It is true that they are missing an opportunity for a great family time, and who knows how many more birthdays Mom may have, but these arguments raise feelings of guilt by which we are all manipulated into doing things we really should not. The sibling has a right to say, "Go ahead without me. I will make it up to you later, Mom," and send a nice card and a gift, and then call. Those sisters should understand. — M.K.

**Dear M.K.:** We agree it is an imposition, and if it's impossible to arrange, so be it. But sometimes these things are worth the effort. They may not be able to make it up to Mom "later."

*Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.*