

Heartland Human Services

# Caregiver Headlines

## February is Heart Disease Awareness Month

*Love Your*  
**Heart!!**

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February is the month in which you should take some things to heart—in particular, **your** heart.

Coronary Heart Disease is the #1 killer of ALL Americans. Heart disease develops slowly and silently, over decades. In fact, it can go virtually unnoticed until it causes a heart attack. However, the good news is that many of the risk factors for heart disease are modifiable (high cholesterol) or entirely preventable (tobacco use). The old adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” certainly applies to this disease.

Many people do not realize they have one of these conditions. You may be at risk! Check here to see how you measure up.

Are you overweight or obese? If you answered yes, you are at risk for high blood pressure, diabetes, heart failure, or stroke. Ask your doctor to calculate your body mass index or go to [www.peiapathways.com](http://www.peiapathways.com) to calculate your body mass index (BMI).

Do you get little or no planned physical activity every week? If you walk 30 minutes at

least 3-4 times a week, (other than walking around the house or at work), you are on the right track. Physical activity helps your circulation, digestion, blood sugar, breathing, and body hormones work better.

Do you smoke or use tobacco products? Smokers have a 70% greater risk of cardiovascular disease than non-smokers.

Do you have high blood pressure that is 140/90 with or without medication? If you have diabetes, blood pressure should be less than 130/85. More than 70% of people with high blood pressure don't have their disease under control.

Do you have high blood cholesterol? This includes total cholesterol (fat-like substance), HDL (good cholesterol), LDL (bad cholesterol), and triglycerides (another form of fat). Lowering your total cholesterol, LDL, and triglycerides levels by 10% can reduce your risk of heart disease by 30%. You may need medication as well as a change in eating habits.

Do you have diabetes? About 18 million Americans have dia-



**National Wear Red Day—February 1.** Americans wear red to show their support for women's heart

betes. Ask your doctor if you should be tested. If you have diabetes, diabetic education can help you keep your blood sugar under control.

If you answered “YES” to any of the above, you may be at risk for heart attack, stroke, or other health conditions.

Now is the time to improve risk factors through lifestyle changes involving nutrition, physical activity, and stress management. Contact your doctor to discuss, any concerns you might have.

—Source  
Shauna King-Anderson  
Navy Medical Clinic, 2003

## Tap the Power of Optimism



**“Grateful reflection helps you to focus on what is going right.”**

Optimists believe that bad things don't last forever and expect good things to happen in the future. Their positive attitude allows them to cope better with obstacles. Pessimists, on the other hand, allow setbacks to cast a shadow over their lives; the future looks bleak, so they feel hopeless and helpless. If you tend to look on the dark side, these simple strategies can help you turn your outlook around.

**Count your blessings.** Research shows that people who regularly give thanks are more optimistic than the thankless. Grateful reflection helps you focus on what is going right and savor the good in life, even during bad times. For a gratitude adjustment, take a daily timeout to think about five things you appreciate, no matter how small.

**Celebrate small successes.**

Focus on five tasks you crossed off your to-do list — not the 10 you wanted to accomplish. Thinking that you're on the right track makes it easier to imagine that tomorrow will be a better day.

**Look for the silver lining.**

To develop a brighter outlook, you need to find the good in a bad situation. Caregiving, for example, may have taught you patience or given you new appreciation for friends whose emotional support has eased your burden. For Sean Patrick, ovarian cancer “has been a blessing in disguise,” helping her to grow spiritually and to discover “an awesome strength I never knew I possessed.”

**Do a reality check.** “We typically worry about issues that may have unpleasant but not

terrible consequences,” says Robert L. Leahy, PhD, author of *The Worry Cure*. To prevent yourself from blowing problems out of proportion, tell yourself: “This is not a problem because...chances are, you'll discover that the gloomy possibilities you are imagining are not rooted in reality.” The more realistic your view of a situation, the more optimistic you'll feel about the outcome.

**Distract yourself.** If your mind is stuck on negative thoughts, shake free of their grim grip by taking a brisk walk, reading a juicy novel, or calling a friend. Or simply try singing a line from a favorite song over and over in your head.

—Source  
*Caring Today*  
January/February 2008

## 6th Annual Symposium for Caregivers



The Effingham County MHASI Team has organized its 6th Annual Symposium for Caregivers. The free, educational event will be held on **Thursday, April 10, 2008** at the K.C. Hall in Effingham. The K.C. Hall is located at 1501 West Fayette Avenue.

The evening begins at 4:30 p.m. with registration and exhibits. A free meal is served from 5:00—6:00 p.m.

At 6:00 p.m., Megan Fulara

from the Attorney General's Office will speak on identity theft.

At 7:00 p.m., we will have round table discussions including: Brain Autopsy, Communicating with someone who has Alzheimer's disease, Food Services—Home Delivered and Congregate Meals, Reverse Mortgages, What to look for when selecting a nursing home, Prepaid Funeral Plans, Medicare Coverage for Home Care, and Behav-

ioral In-Patient Stays. Each person will get an opportunity to attend 3 different discussions.

At 8:00 p.m., Larry Quicksall will entertain caregivers with a humorous and motivating presentation.

As usual we will be drawing door prizes throughout the evening with grand prizes to be drawn at the end of the last session. Caregivers must be present to win.

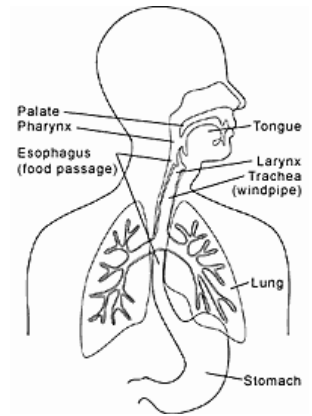
**Mark your calendars!**

## What is Dysphagia?

People with dysphagia have difficulty swallowing and may also experience pain while swallowing. Some people may be completely unable to swallow or may have trouble swallowing liquids, foods, or saliva. Often, dysphagia makes it difficult to take in enough calories and fluids to nourish the body.

### What are some problems caused by dysphagia?

Someone who cannot swallow well may not be able to eat enough of the right foods to stay healthy or maintain an ideal weight. Sometimes, when foods or liquids enter the windpipe of a person who has dysphagia, coughing or throat clearing cannot remove it. Food or liquid that stays in the windpipe may enter the lungs and create a chance for harmful bacteria to grow. A serious infection (aspiration pneumonia) can result. Another swallowing disorder is caused by weakness in the esophageal wall. An abnormal pocket outside the esophagus may draw undigested food into the pharynx (especially while lying down). The esophagus may be too narrow, causing food to stick, which may prevent other food or even liquids from entering the stomach.



### How is dysphagia treated?

Once the cause of the dysphagia is found, surgery or medication may help. If treating the cause of the dysphagia does not help, the doctor may have the patient see a speech-language pathologist who is trained in testing and treating swallowing disorders. The speech-language pathologist will test the person's ability to eat and drink and may teach the person new ways to swallow. Treatment may involve muscle exercises to strengthen weak facial muscles or to improve coordination. For others, treatment may involve learning to eat in a special way. For example, some people may have to eat with their head turned to one side or looking straight ahead. Preparing food in a certain way or avoiding certain foods may help other people. For instance, those who cannot swallow liquids may need to add special thickeners to their drinks. Other people may have to avoid hot or cold foods or drinks.

For more information on dysphagia, speak with your health care professional or visit [www.nidcd.nih.gov](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov).

## Caregiver Resource & Support Meetings

All sites are accessible

### Fayette County & Surrounding Area

February 5  
 March 4 (3:30-4:30 p.m.)  
 April 1  
 3:00 p.m.— 4:00 p.m.  
 First United Methodist Church  
 127 N. 4th Street  
 Vandalia, IL  
 Meets in Library

### Jefferson County & Surrounding Area

February 12  
 March 11  
 April 8  
 3:00 p.m.— 4:00 p.m.  
 Addus Evergreen Club  
 108 N. 3rd Street  
 Mt. Vernon, IL  
 Meets in North Room



### Effingham County & Surrounding Area

February 18  
 March 24 (this is the 4th Monday)  
 April 21  
 3:30 p.m.— 4:30 p.m.  
 Heartland Human Services  
 1200 N. 4th Street  
 Effingham, IL  
 Meets in Room 119

### Marion County & Surrounding Area

February 19  
 March 18  
 April 15  
 4:00 p.m.— 5:00 p.m.  
 St. Thomas Episcopal Church  
 512 W. Main Street  
 Salem, IL  
 Meets in Church Basement  
 (Wheelchair lift available)

**If you would like to attend the meeting but need respite, please call the Caregiver Advisor at 1-888-560-8805 ext. 1062 so that an in-home worker can be arranged.**

## Library Resource Hours

### Fayette County: Evans Public Library

512 5th Street  
Vandalia, IL  
10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. (by appointment only)  
Next Visits: **February 5**  
**March 4**  
**April 1**

### Effingham County: Helen Matthes Library

100 Market Street  
Effingham, IL  
10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. (by appointment only)  
Next Visits: **February 7**  
**March 6**  
**April 3**

### Jefferson County: CE Brehm Memorial Library

100 South 7th  
Mt. Vernon, IL  
10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. (by appointment only)  
Next Visits: **February 12**  
**March 11**  
**April 8**

### Marion County: Bryan-Bennett Library

217 W. Main Street  
Salem, IL  
1:00 p.m.—3:30 p.m. (by appointment only)  
Next Visits: **February 19**  
**March 18**  
**April 15**

### Clay County: Flora Public Library

216 N. Main  
Flora, IL  
1:30 p.m.—3:00 p.m. (by appointment only)  
Next Visits: **February 26**  
**March 25**  
**April 22**

### Remember...

Please call at least one day in advance to schedule your appointment with the Caregiver Advisor during Library Resource Hours at 1-888-560-8805 ext. 1062.

## Video of the Month

Video Respite was designed to capture and maintain the attention of those with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia through music, light movement, and the recollection of fond memories. The caregiver is able to enjoy short periods of "respite" or "time away" from the challenges of caregiving.

In *Movement, Music, and Memories*, Cathy encourages viewers to move, walk, and march along with favorite songs while sharing stories and songs. There's a visit from a boy playing kickball and a fluffy lamb.

Songs include: "Ring Around the Rosie," "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree," "Mary Had a Little Lamb," "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," "My Grandfather's Clock, and "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles."

Approximate length is 45 minutes and is in VHS format.

### Who can benefit from this video?

- Alzheimer's patients
- Those recovering from a stroke or brain injury
- Dementia associated with advanced age
- Caregivers who want to relax with the care receiver
- Caregivers who need a calming activity for an individual who is restless

If you are interested in this particular video respite, it can be checked out from the library at Heartland Human Services. Contact the Caregiver Advisor toll-free at 1-888-560-8805 ext. 1062.

For more information about Video Respite, visit the website [www.videorespite.com](http://www.videorespite.com).



## Communicating with Your Loved One



Effective Communication with someone you love who is disabled for medical reasons or a progressive illness is often difficult. Roles have changed, and both you and your loved one may fear the future. Follow these guidelines and your caregiving experience will be more rewarding for both you and your loved one.

**Knowing:** You have to “know” the other person to respond appropriately to their needs. They may have changed, but they are still the same person inside. Keep that inside person in mind at all times. Remembering who that person really is helps you approach caregiving responsibilities in a more personal and intimate manner.

**Patience:** This goes both ways. You must have patience with each other to get through successfully.

**Trust:** You have to have faith in your ability as a caregiver. Your loved one has to trust you as a caregiver, regardless of the roles you played before the illness.

**Authenticity:** No matter how stressful the role, if you approach caregiving as something you do from your heart, it will make the task easier. If your loved one senses that you’re doing the job because you want to, they’ll be more cooperative and more willing to work out the com-

promises that will keep *you* healthier and happier throughout the process.

**Humility:** Be willing to learn from your loved one and avoid arrogance that may come from frustrations.

**Responsiveness:** This doesn't mean you have to jump every time your loved one calls. It does mean that you need to be sensitive to subtle nonverbal cues and respond to your loved one as the individual human being they were before they became ill.

**Participation:** Your loved one’s responses, no matter how simple, open the door for you to more accurately understand what they need, or how much they need. Try to help your loved one find meaning in the situation. If they know they aren’t going to live much longer, there’s a lot going on in their minds. Help them feel comfortable about communicating their feelings to you, then have the courage to tell them how you feel.

**Competence:** Learn all that you can about your loved one’s condition and demonstrate that you are competent to make decisions about their care. They will relax and become more compliant with the regimens that you develop to give them the best care and organize your responsibilities.

**Commitment:** Sometimes you’ve got the job whether you wanted it or not. But if it’s yours, commit to it. If you’re constantly fighting the idea that you’ve become a caregiver or if you resent it, you and your loved one will both suffer.

**Being ‘present’:** Don’t get caught in the trap of just trying to get it all done and working “around” your loved one. Take the time to notice what’s in their eyes, their tone of voice, etc. Communicate with touch and words while getting things done. They’ll feel more comfortable, less frightened, and less of a burden to you.

**Hope:** An attitude of hope will help your loved one and remind you that your life must go on no matter how the situation develops. A positive outlook can be infectious to your loved one. The care receivers often live up to the expectations of the caregiver, whether positive or negative.

**Teamwork:** Learn to work with your loved one, healthcare professionals, and any others who are involved in the caregiving team. It builds confidence, streamlines time and effort, and keeps everyone pitching in without feeling threatened or overburdened.

—Source  
American Heart Association, 2007  
[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

## Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense but most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren’t sure what’s wrong and wait too long before getting help. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

♥ **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort

in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.

♥ **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.

♥ **Shortness of breath** with or without chest discomfort.

♥ **Other signs** may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

—Source  
American Heart Association  
[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)



Men and women’s most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort.

Heartland Human Services  
1200 North Fourth Street  
P.O. Box 1047  
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Phone: 1-888-560-8805 ext. 1062  
Fax: 217-342-6716  
E-mail: [dmarkwell@heartlandhs.org](mailto:dmarkwell@heartlandhs.org)

**We're on the web!**  
[www.heartlandhs.org](http://www.heartlandhs.org)

## Announcements

**Need a caregiver?**

**Person looking for caregiving work in Effingham County. \$10/hour.**  
For further details, call Linda Warner at 217-347-7179 ext 1046

**March 27 — Total Wellness when Aging**  
University of Illinois Extension Office in Salem  
Registration at 8:30 – 9:00 a.m. and ends by 12:00 p.m.  
Topics include: Nutrition, Physical Fitness, and Legal Considerations  
(More information in March newsletter)

**April 10 — 6th Annual Symposium for Family Caregivers in Effingham**  
See Page 2 for details

**April 16 — Save the Date: Internet Basics**  
Flora High School  
4:00 p.m.—6:00 p.m.