TO CALL OR NOT TO CALL? THAT IS THE QUESTION.

by Connie Wessels, ARNP and Julie Ehlinger, ARNP

Heart failure is the number one reason a person of the age of 65 is admitted to the hospital. We frequently hear from these patients that they have been feeling short of breath or tired for the past two, three, or four weeks. They will report sometimes feeling better for a day or two, but then they feel worse again. This variance in symptoms can make it hard for patients to know if they should call their healthcare provider or not. It is especially common with the first episode of heart failure, but also with episodes of heart failure that may occur at any time down the road.

We want to stress that it is very important to call your healthcare provider right away if you feel short of breath, more tired than usual, have more swelling, or have gained weight. Any change you feel may signal the start of a concern, so please call your provider. Perhaps an office visit or an adjustment to your medications may be all you need to start feeling better.

Our goal is to keep you feeling well and out of the hospital so you can enjoy living your life! It is much easier to take care of early heart failure than when symptoms are more advanced. When the blood vessels in the gut become puffy with fluid, they do not absorb pills as well, so your medicine may not work as well. At that point you may have to be hospitalized for intravenous or IV medicine. Please do not wait until you are so ill that you need to be hospitalized. When a person is admitted to the hospital for an episode of heart failure, the risk of readmission is approximately 25% in the first 30 days and 50% in the first six months. It is very important to call your provider if you have new or more active symptoms. We are here to serve you.

APPS FOR MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

by Beth Engel, PharmD

Do you have trouble remembering to take your medications? Do you have a smart phone? If so, new and improved apps are make it easy to remember to take the right medication at the right time. Stay on schedule with one of the apps to the right.

Download these apps from the App Store or Google Play. Enter all of your medications, including the name, dosage, and time taken. The apps will send reminders when you are due to take your medications. You will also receive reminders when it’s time to get your medications refilled. These apps will track how well you are doing and will send you progress reports on a weekly or monthly basis. Don’t forget to share the reports with your healthcare team!

If you aren’t tech savvy, there are other medication reminder tools you can use. For example, you may use an alarm clock or a weekly medication box. Regardless of the method you choose, taking your medications as prescribed can help improve your health outcomes and quality of life while decreasing medical costs.
COMMUNITY EDUCATION:

All Support Group Programs are held at: Mercy Medical Center, Sixth Floor Auditorium, 250 Mercy Drive, Dubuque, IA
Registration is required. Call 563-589-9600 or register online at www.mercydubuque.com/events. There is no registration fee.

SAVE YOUR SKIN

TUESDAY, MAY 10, 2016
6-7:00 P.M.

The days of slathering on baby oil to achieve a bronze glow are gone. We now know the resulting blistering burns definitely need to be avoided. Join Jessica Larsen, PA-C, from the Dermatology Department at Medical Associates as she discusses how to protect your skin and prevent skin cancer. Learn what to watch for, how to identify changes with moles, and what level of sunscreen is right for you.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT/BRAND HEALTH

TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2016
6-7:00 P.M.

Foods affect your brain as much as the rest of your body. Selecting the right foods may reduce your risk of dementia, Alzheimer’s, depression, anxiety, and even overeating. A Mercy Dietician will sort out the information so you can make important changes to improve your brain health.

LOW SODIUM DIET CLASS

MAY 16 | JUNE 20 | JULY 18
1:30–2:30 P.M.

Join Mercy’s registered, licensed dietitian/nutritionist to review guidelines for the low sodium diet. Class includes sodium limit per day, review of the high sodium foods list, how and why to keep a food journal, dining out low sodium, and how to implement changes in your diet.

This class meets on the third Monday of each month in the PAP building, Mercy Cardiac Rehab 3rd floor classroom. Call 563-584-3425 to register.

STROKE: KNOW THE FACTS AND REDUCE THE RISK

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2016
6-7:00 P.M.

Stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain stops, affecting around 800,000 Americans every year. Learn from Mercy’s stroke coordinator, Sara Bechen, BSN, RN, about the different types of stroke, modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors, and ways to reduce your risk. Sign up for a chance to win a free stroke detection screening, a value of $135.

ASPARAGUS FOR EVERYONE!

by Brooke Steigauf, RD, LD

Spring is here and asparagus is popping up to prove it! Asparagus is one of May’s early vegetables and it is nutritious, delicious, and versatile. Asparagus contains the mineral potassium which helps control blood pressure and may lower the risk of cardiovascular disease. In addition to potassium, asparagus contains folate, a nutrient needed for healthy cells, and fiber. Fiber promotes a healthy gastrointestinal tract by helping our bodies digest food more slowly. Fiber also acts as an internal scrub-brush, and finally, it helps lower cholesterol, a key piece of cardiovascular health.

Asparagus is tasty grilled, roasted, boiled, or raw. The mild flavor allows asparagus to be paired with a variety of foods. Try it in an omelet with tomatoes and feta cheese. It makes a great addition to pasta with white or red sauce. Add asparagus to a soup, or eat it just on it’s own for a quick snack. Asparagus may be found at your local grocery store, or the Summer Dubuque Farmer’s Market, which opened May 7th.