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In appreciation of contributions to Elder Care in 2021

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Elder Care calls to check on me often to make sure my needs are met. They make it possible for me to have independent living at home and for that, I am extremely grateful. — Elder Care Client



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Love your heart!

by Ashlyen Fisher, Guest Contributor

February is Heart Month! It is the perfect time to prioritize heart health so that you can live a happy and healthy life.

Did you know that high blood pressure (hypertension) impacts your brain as well as your heart? High blood pressure is rightly known as “the silent killer,” often carrying no warning signs or noticeable symptoms but can drastically increase your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. The higher the number, the harder your heart has to work to pump blood around your body, and the more likely you are damaging the heart muscle. However, all parts of your body rely on circulation, so it is not just your heart that high blood pressure can impact.

High blood pressure (or “hypertension”) has been shown to damage the tiny blood vessels in the parts of your brain responsible for cognition and memory, increasing your risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia. Additionally, being diagnosed with cardiovascular disease can also take an emotional toll, affecting your outlook and making you more susceptible to anxiety and depression. Depression and anxiety can often lead to stress, self-medicating, and isolation. Stress can increase the body’s production of hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol which can result in blood pressure rising. Self-medicating your mood with alcohol, nicotine, junk food, or recreational drugs can also elevate your blood pressure and be harmful. Lastly, isolating yourself from family and friends, which is a common symptom of depression or anxiety, can raise your blood pressure higher.

If you suffer from high blood pressure, it’s easy to feel intimidated by the changes you need to make to improve your health. While some people may only need to work on one or two areas to reduce their blood pressure,



most of us find that we need to improve our habits in several areas. Even if you can check all the fixable boxes right now; smoke, drink heavily, are overweight, stressed out, sedentary, and eat nothing but junk and processed food, that doesn’t mean you have to tackle everything all at once. Making lots of different lifestyle changes at the same time can be overwhelming. When we feel overwhelmed, it’s easy to opt for doing nothing rather than doing something.

Start gradually and make one or two changes, to begin with. Once those changes have become a habit, you can tackle one or two more, and so on.

Set specific goals. The more specific your goal, the easier it is to accomplish. For example, instead of saying, “I’ll eat healthier and get more exercise,” try “I’ll add two servings of vegetables to my evening meal and walk for 30 minutes in my lunch hour.”

Prepare for relapse and setbacks. Nobody gets it right all the time. Don’t beat yourself up. Instead, turn the setbacks into a rebound by learning what your body and health need to succeed.

Love yourself and work towards a healthier you. If you would like to visit with one of our health and wellness professionals, call us. We can help! (918) 336-8500.

February Goal: "Workout with a Partner"

by Foundation Therapy Specialists Staff



It is well documented that exercise has a vast number of benefits on health; these include reducing the risk of heart disease, improving mood and sleep, and decreasing the risk of falls. It is recommended by the Department of Health and Human Services to get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week. It can be challenging to obtain this amount of exercise each week, especially when going at it alone.

Studies show that working out with a friend, spouse, or partner can increase motivation and accountability. A study from The Journal of Family Practice found that having an exercise partner can increase weekly time spent on exercising by up to 44 percent. Having a fitness partner can be beneficial in many ways. Accountability is one of the best tools for anyone that is trying something new or something that they have struggled with in the past. Accountability works, a study from the CDC showed that having an exercise

partner can increase motivation to not only exercise but to put forth more effort when exercising. Having a friend or a spouse to help push each other to success is a key tool when sticking to an exercise program, especially if it is something new.

The saying "Two Brains are better than one" is true. A study from the CDC concluded that those who exercised with a partner did a better job at keeping their workouts enjoyable and engaging. Having two minds that see things differently allows for more creativity amongst how the workout is structured. Trying something new can be intimidating, having that partner or group for support can alleviate that feeling and help people feel more comfortable to try something challenging.

Social media and television can make exercise look intimidating, but it does not have to be this way. If you're new to working out, some activities to ease into could be taking a brisk walk outdoors, gardening, or some spring cleaning around the house. According to the "American Heart Association," such activities are proven to lower the risk of developing several diseases. Some of those include Type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's, dementia, heart disease, high blood pressure, and even several types of cancer. Another study by the "American Heart Association" found that exercise can promote stronger bones, alleviate symptoms of anxiety or depression, as well as improve quality of life and enhance an overall sense of well-being.

Everyone benefits from having someone to encourage them when taking on something challenging or new. When taking on a new lifestyle of fitness, try to include your spouse or invite a friend to join you on the journey. Take small steps. Enjoy the walk and expand your movement horizons and exercise with a friend or partner this month!

How Your Heart Health Impacts Your Thinking

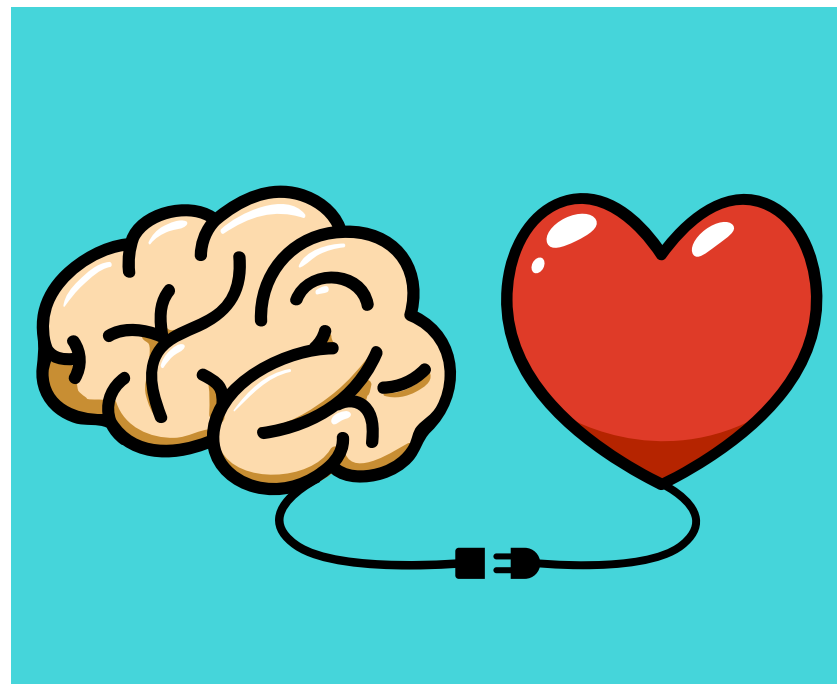
By Abigayl Petermann, Speech Language Pathologist

Most people are aware of the negative effects of cardiovascular disease on the body. Most people are also aware of some of the primary risk factors for developing cardiovascular disease: smoking, abnormal cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, metabolic disorders, alcohol abuse, depression, and overall inactivity or poor nutrition.

It is less common knowledge that there is also a relationship between cardiovascular health and cognitive health. Of course, many people who have cardiovascular diseases suffer from stroke or dementia, which directly affects the brain and its function. Still, cognitive function can be impacted by the disease before these major events or diagnoses occur.

Cardiovascular disease can cause “atrophy,” a term referring to the wasting or loss of tissue in the brain. It can also impact the production of neurotransmitters that are important in cognitive functioning. Cognitive changes related to poor heart health may include a decline in your ability to pay attention, process information, remember information, and utilize your executive functions such as planning, organizing, self-monitoring, and reasoning.

So what can you do to preserve your ability to think clearly and efficiently?



The good news is, many of the risk factors for CVD and cognitive-communication decline are modifiable. That means that you can fix the root cause, and thereby eliminate or reduce the symptoms. Talk to your doctor about ways that you can improve your cardiovascular health, and in doing so, you will also be preventing unnecessary cognitive decline. If you are already experiencing symptoms of cognitive-communication impairments, a speech-language pathologist can provide you with education and strategies for maintaining or improving your functional performance in the face of your changing thinking skills.

Consider asking your doctor for a referral and making an appointment with our speech-language pathologist by calling Elder Care at 918-766-0391.



SPECIALIZING IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY,
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Love Your Plants: Tips for Late Winter and Early Spring

by Guest Contributor, Betty Turner, Washington County Extension Master Gardener

It is the season for seed and other plant catalogs to arrive in our mailboxes tempting us to try new plants. This article provides some plant choice tips as well as some garden needs for late winter. Reminder, Bartlesville's plant hardiness zone is a Zone 6 meaning the average low is -10 to 0 F. Tulsa is Zone 7 having an average low of 0 to 10 F. This explains why we sometimes lose nice shrubs or perennials when winter temperatures drop below these average lows.

Before you place an order be aware that plants will grow better and be hardier if the new plants were grown in Oklahoma or a nearby state that has similar moisture and heat conditions. If you were to order plants grown in Zone 6 of an eastern state, such as Pennsylvania, those plants will not be as hardy in our summer winds, heat, drought and hot summer nights as will plants originating from this area.

Tropical plants make beautiful specimens, provide more design options in our gardens and are a good choice to grow as an annual.

Master Gardeners are often asked for flowering plant suggestions to grow under trees. Once trees have been in the ground a few years research has shown that flowering plants produce few flowers when they are planted under trees. This is because a tree's feeder roots are so dense and close to the surface that tree roots consume most of the nutrients and moisture where they are growing. However, non-flowering plants that have colorful leaves, such as different colors of green leaves or coleus, are a good choice to plant under trees. Research has also shown that most trees should never have more than one inch of topsoil per year added under a tree, as the new soil reduces the amount of oxygen and nutrients the tree can absorb. Fresh mulch to a depth of two to three inches can be added but all mulch should be kept at

least one inch away from the base of the tree trunk. All grass growth should be kept away from under young trees as far out as the leaves grow to help the tree grow more rapidly.



Plant ideas specific for growing in our area will be found on the Oklahoma State University Extension website. Search for the Oklahoma Proven Plant Selections for Oklahoma (E-1052). The list includes color pictures and descriptions of four different plants selected per year since 1999. Also search for Drought-Tolerant Plant Selections for Oklahoma (HLA-6444) and click on the PDF version. The Water-Efficient Landscape for Oklahoma (E-1051) booklet is also a great plant reference in color; plant selections begin on page 19.

Whenever possible, buy and grow pest resistant plants such as Oklahoma Proven selections or other recommended varieties. By doing so, the need for pest control measures can be greatly reduced.

Cut back ornamental grass foliage by early March, or before it begins to turn green.

Annual flowers can be planted after danger of frost, which on average is April 15 in this part of Oklahoma.

Additional information on these topics available at Oklahoma State University Fact Sheets E-1051, E-1052, HLA-6444. Send gardening questions to washingtoncomg@okstate.edu or call 918-534-2216 for a Master Gardener response. More information on Facebook page www.facebook.com/washcomg.