

# Your Health

Do not diagnose your own condition ... specific questions and concerns should be directed to your health care providers



## Ask the Doctor

Rockelle Rogers, M.D.

Dr. Rogers is a specialist in Internal Medicine (Internist). An internist is a specialist in adult medicine. Please send questions to Dr. Rogers' e-mail address at [rockeller@aol.com](mailto:rockeller@aol.com). One question is chosen bimonthly.

Dear Dr. Rogers,

Lately, I have been experiencing muscle and leg cramps. What could this possibly be and what can I do about it?

Persistent muscle and leg cramps is a symptom that should not be ignored. You should see your physician if you are experiencing this on a regular basis. This can be a sign of electrolyte abnormality such as low potassium. Low potassium is an electrolyte that is very important in the body and if depleted can cause early signs of muscle or leg cramps followed by more life threatening conditions such as heart irregularity. A common cause of this is the use of a diuretic medication or water pill without replacement of potassium. Some diuretics are mild and do not require potassium replacement while others are stronger and usually require replacement with a water pill. Foods that are rich in potassium include bananas and leafy green vegetables.

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I have both diabetes and hypertension. My doctor says I am at risk for kidney problems. What does this mean?

Both diabetes and hypertension are serious risk factors for kidney disease. It is important to keep both of these conditions under good control to avoid kidney disease. It is important to maintain a blood pressure less than or equal to 130/75 if you already have any signs of kidney disease such as protein in your urine or elevated creatinine. There are also medications that your doctor can add to your regimen to

protect your kidneys from diabetic kidney disease. These medications are called angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers. Most of them have names ending in "pril".

If you already have evidence of kidney disease, it is important to avoid and prevent further progression. Your doctor can let you know this by measuring your urine for protein and a particular protein called microalbumin and also by measuring your creatinine. Once evidence of kidney disease is present, you will need to monitor the level of protein in your diet (it will need to be reduced) and also avoid medications that can damage your kidneys such as chronic or regular use of anti-inflammatory medications such as motrin or ibuprofen. It is also important to regularly check your blood pressure and home blood pressure monitoring would be a good start. Blood pressure monitors are available at most drug stores and department stores. It is also a covered benefit under most health insurances if you have hypertension or diabetes and especially with any signs of kidney disease. It would be well to monitor you blood pressure at least 2-3 X week first thing in the morning. Finally, kidney disease and failure is a serious health problem. Research reports indicate and propose that the number of people with chronic kidney disease will double by the year 2010. You should plan not to be one of the thousands (soon to be millions) of people on dialysis. The first step to prevention is really education and awareness.

Happy February!!!

## Couple's Health Holds Key To Heart Disease Risk

(BlackDoctor.org) -- Being with someone else makes you share the things you each like to do. But when it comes to health, there might be a little sharing going on for coronary risk.

A new study shows that if one spouse has risk factors for heart disease, the other spouse is more likely to share similarities in measures of health, such as smoking, body mass index, blood pressure, triglycerides, LDL "bad" cholesterol, and weight.

Smoking and body mass index have the most significant correlations.

The report, published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, evaluated 71 existing research papers that looked at similarities for major coronary risk factors in more than 100,000 pairs of spouses.

There may be reasons for the similarity between spouses, according to the researchers. First, spouses share environmental factors; they have the same lifestyle. Secondly, people tend to be attracted to mates like themselves, a phenomenon called positive assortative mating.

The researchers argue that interventions that try to reduce coronary risk factors should be aimed at couples and families instead of just individuals. "This concept may bring an important public health message, because prevention policy for cardiovascular disease could also be targeted toward apparently healthy spousal partners of individuals with an obviously increased cardiovascular risk," the researchers write in their conclusion.

By Nicole Smith, BDO Staff Writer

## Bulimia Connected To Brain Activity

(BlackDoctor.org) -- Bulimia nervosa in women are higher these days. Bulimia is a serious eating disorder problem that individuals, mostly women, binge eat followed by a self-induced vomiting to not gain weight. The brain activity of women in the study shows that there may be particular impulses that contribute.

The study, published in January's edition of the Archives of General Psychiatry, included 20 women with bulimia and 20 women without bulimia. The women's ages and BMI were similar in both groups.

Each woman had her brain scanned using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) while she took a brain function test. In the test, arrows pointing to the left or right popped up on the right or left side of a screen, and the women had to press a button to indicate the arrow's direction.

That task is easier when the arrow's direction matches its position on the screen (such as a left-pointing arrow on the left side of the screen) than when there's a conflict (for instance, the left-pointing arrow on the right side of the screen).

In the test, the arrows come and go quickly; participants' scores are based on accuracy and speed.

The women with bulimia nervosa did worse on the test, particularly because they were more impulsive and inaccurate when the arrow's direction didn't match its screen location. And the women with the most severe bulimia symptoms had the least success on the test.

The brain scans showed that the bulimic women had less activity in brain areas involved in self-regulation.

The reasons for the different brain activity patterns aren't clear. The researchers, who included Rachel Marsh, PhD, of Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute, speculate that problems with the brain chemicals serotonin and dopamine may be involved.

Because the women who took part in the study were in their mid-20s on average, it's not clear if the findings apply to younger bulimia patients or men with bulimia.

By John Williams, BDO Staff



## The Fitness Corner

By Chuck Wilson

Be Fit and Be Well,  
Chuck



Chuck Wilson is founder of Fit & Healthy Consulting. To contact Chuck for speaking engagements, e-mail [chucal92@hotmail.com](mailto:chucal92@hotmail.com) or Tel (734) 717-8284

### Taking Care of Your "Sweat-Heart"

Valentines Day is symbolized by the shape of the heart – which is meant to express love between a man and a woman. Well, that got me to thinking about fitness – you knew I was going to go there – and about the grim statistics concerning heart disease and all of it's related complications.

While I won't spoil the "love mood" by listing all of the ugly the stats in this piece, I will say "It don't look good." Now I know that's not correct grammar but, you get the point.

What can you do to reduce the chances of developing heart disease? Keep reading . . .

**Get Active** – moderate exercise most days of the week

**Eat Right** -- Your body needs proper nutrition, and because your brain and your heart are very important body parts

**Manage your stress** -- Elevated stress levels can throw your entire body out of whack, and put additional stress on your body parts, including your heart and brain. Learn how to effectively manage your stress.

"That's it? Chuck you're always making things look so simple!" You're right, I like to put these tips in the – to borrow and old math phrase – "lowest possible terms". And besides, these tips address the areas you have control over when developing a strategy to prevent heart disease.

So enjoy and Valentines Day and remember to take care of your "sweet-heart".

## Organ Donation Effort takes center stage at KVCC

An effort to increase the number of organ donors in Michigan is under way, and Kalamazoo Valley Community College students are taking part in a friendly competition among their counterparts across the state to expand the registration roster.

Orchestrated by Gift of Life Michigan to build the ranks of organ and tissue donors throughout the state, the 2009 University Challenge is open to students, faculty, staff and alumni at the 15 competing schools as well as residents in the communities where those colleges and universities are located.

In addition to KVCC, Western Michigan University, and Glen Oaks Community College, among the schools taking part are Calvin College, Ferris State University, Michigan State University, the University of Detroit-Mercy, the University of Michigan, Grand Valley State University, Lake Superior State University, North Central Michigan College, Northern Michigan University, Oakland University, Siena Heights University, and the Traverse City University Center.

Students in KVCC's chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society are organizing the local "contest" to increase the number of registered organ donors over a six-week period.

"Just one organ donor can potentially save the lives of up to eight others and improve life for up to 50 people through tissue donation," said KVCC instructor Natalie Patchell, who is the PTK chapter adviser. "More than 3,000 people in Michigan are currently waiting for an organ transplant, while less than 1,000 transplants occurred here last year. Obviously, the need is great."

KVCC faculty, staff and students, as well as Kalamazoo-area residents, can give the gift of life by joining the registry online at this website: [www.giftoflifemichigan.org](http://www.giftoflifemichigan.org). Registering is said to take less than a minute.

"Be sure to choose 'school/college' from the drop-down menu," Patchell said, "and then select KVCC as your school." Each school is vying for a pair of trophies.

The Michigan Department of State will provide red-heart donor stickers to be placed on the front of a driver's license or state ID card to those who join the Michigan Organ Donor Registry. Those who have joined the registry already or who have signed the back of their licenses are asked to update their registration to receive one of the stickers.

People without a driver's license or state ID card can still be part of the registry, but they will not receive a red sticker.

Since its inception in 2004, the Gift of Life Michigan University Challenge has resulted in more than 19,500 adding their names to the organ-donor registry.

More information about the local initiative is available by contacting Patchell at [npatchell@kvcc.edu](mailto:npatchell@kvcc.edu) or 488-4362. The telephone number for the state organization is (734) 922-1048.

The 2008 Gift of Life Challenge resulted in 2,504 enrollees across the state. KVCC enlisted 101 donors, which placed it eighth in the competition. Leading the way for two-year institutions was Muskegon Community College (MCC) with 239 enlistees. Michigan State University placed first with 956, followed by Northern Michigan University with 382. Western Michigan University was fourth with 195 donors.

## Five Antioxidant-Rich Foods You Should Add To Your Diet

(BlackDoctor.org) -- Ever wonder what type of food has the highest amount of antioxidants? It's a question that researchers at the University of Oslo recently decided to tackle, examining 1,113 different foods in order to determine which ones contained the highest concentration of antioxidants.

Antioxidants are the natural chemicals in foods that can help to protect against cell damage, potentially warding off cancer, signs of aging, and a whole number of other diseases. To find out which foods contained some of the highest amounts of antioxidants, take a look at the following:

Blackberries (1 cup) -- Try eating these for a snack or toss them into a smoothie or on top of a salad.

Walnuts (15-20 halves) -- Grab a handful of these for a mid-afternoon snack or sprinkle a few on top of your dinner salad.

Strawberries (1 cup) -- Whether you toss them into a smoothie, eat them as a snack, or create a strawberry shortcake dinner for dessert, this fruit tastes good no matter what.

Artichoke hearts (1 cup) -- Try tossing these into a salad or a whole wheat pasta dish at dinner time.

Cranberries (1 cup) -- Try adding these to your favorite muffin/bread recipes, and/or toss some dried cranberries into a salad.

By Nicole Smith, BDO Staff Writer