

# heart smart

FALL 2009



## what women need to know

### + HER HEART

A heart blockage was the last thing Pamela Graham expected

**PAGE 2**

### + DUAL DANGER

High blood sugar could put you at higher risk for heart disease

**PAGE 3**

### + STRESS LESS

If stress is harming your heart, it's time to relax

**PAGE 3**

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**HELP FOR YOUR HEART**



# unexpected events

Heart disease can happen to anyone, so don't let symptoms catch you by surprise

**Pamela Graham is the last person anyone would expect to have heart disease. The 59-year-old interior designer from Dallas exercises regularly, eats right, maintains a healthy weight, and doesn't smoke or drink too much.**

But four years ago, while she was exercising, Graham experienced what felt like a muscle cramp at the center of her chest. The pain went away, so Graham kept up with her hectic schedule, including preparations for a party with 145 guests and an upcoming skiing vacation.

But the pain came back, sometimes even when she wasn't exercising. Graham was convinced it was nothing more serious than indigestion—"I've always aced every medical test," she says—but she went to see an internist on the medical staff at Baylor University Medical Center at Dallas.

While taking a stress test to check blood flow to her heart, Graham began having severe chest pain again. The doctors on the medical staff at Baylor Dallas discovered a 99 percent blockage in one of the major arteries of her heart, and placed a stent into the artery to relieve the blockage.

"There's so much that can be done today to treat or prevent heart disease," says Melissa Carry, M.D., FACC, a cardiologist on the medical staffs at Baylor Hamilton Heart and Vascular Hospital and Baylor Dallas. "Even women who are really fit and healthy, like Pamela, should never ignore a warning sign—getting prompt treatment could help them prevent a potentially catastrophic event."

Graham returned home the next day and went on to throw her party and go on her vacation. "The doctors told me if this had happened on my ski trip, I probably wouldn't be here," she says.

She still visits the cardiologists at Baylor Dallas, for checkups and keeps an eye on every cardiac risk factor, including her most significant one: a family history. Her father died of a heart attack at age 56.

Dr. Carry adds that Graham's story underscores the importance of



*Pamela Graham*

women paying attention to symptoms of heart disease. "You can't be so busy taking care of everyone else that you don't take care of yourself," she says. "Fortunately, Pamela did the right thing by seeing a doctor, and now she's doing really well."



## Listen to Your Heart

If you're at risk for or have symptoms of heart disease, talk to your doctor. For a referral to a cardiologist on the medical staff at Baylor Hamilton Heart and Vascular Hospital or Baylor Dallas, call **1-800-4BAYLOR** or visit **[BaylorHeartHospital.com/physicianfinder](http://BaylorHeartHospital.com/physicianfinder)** or **[BaylorHealth.com/physicianfinder](http://BaylorHealth.com/physicianfinder)**.

## KNOW YOUR numbers

### 30

**MINUTES?** Experts suggest a half-hour of exercise most days of the week. Talk to your doctor about how much activity you should get, especially if you have existing health conditions.

### when?

**HOW OFTEN SHOULD I SCREEN?** If your blood pressure, cholesterol or blood glucose is outside the normal range, you may need more frequent testing to help you manage these risk factors.

### 1 or 2

Alcohol can contribute to the development of heart disease. Most experts say it's safe for women to consume up to one drink a day, but check with your doctor to be sure.

### who?

**DO FAMILY TIES MATTER?** Women are more likely to develop heart problems if a parent or sibling has heart disease. Ask your doctor if your family history requires preventive measures.