Heart Smart

Martha says goodbye to arm pain

HEALTHY NOW & FOREVER  Teach your kids to live well for life. See page 4 to learn more, or visit BaylorHealth.com/DallasHeart

NUMBERS TO KNOW

JULY 2011

CARDIAC CARE

BE A QUITTER!
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Going with the Flow

Baylor relieves one woman’s pain by restoring circulation to her hand and arm

At first, Martha Ausburn shrugged off her hand and arm pain as nothing serious. When her right hand would get numb and her fingers would tingle, she’d just shake it out to get the blood flowing again.

But it wasn’t long before the 51-year-old Dallas resident was in so much pain that she was having trouble with daily activities like typing, grocery shopping and blow-drying her hair.

She was initially diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome but later told a doctor friend about her pain and the fact that her hand often felt cold. He checked the pulse in her arm, and when he couldn’t find one, he referred her to Baylor University Medical Center at Dallas.

There, Ausburn was diagnosed with a condition called thoracic outlet syndrome. In her case, it was the result of an extra rib causing trauma to the subclavian artery that feeds the arm, and an aneurysm had formed.

“People with thoracic outlet syndrome experience symptoms related to compression on nerves causing pain, numbness or weakness in the shoulder, arm or hand,” explains Greg Pearl, M.D., medical director of vascular surgery and a vascular surgeon on the medical staff at Baylor Dallas and Baylor Hamilton Heart and Vascular Hospital. “In some cases, blood clots can develop leading to poor circulation.”

Thoracic outlet syndrome isn’t always caused by an extra rib and can happen at any age—especially in athletes or people who participate in regular strenuous activity. If it’s left untreated, the loss of circulation could lead to gangrene, amputation or permanent nerve damage.

Fortunately, Baylor has vast experience treating thoracic outlet syndrome. Surgeons removed Ausburn’s extra rib and replaced the damaged part of the artery where the aneurysm was with a graft.

Auscurn says she could tell the difference right after surgery. The pain in her hand was gone. After a brief recovery period she was back to her normal activities.

“I feel like a new person,” she says. “I just wish I hadn’t let the pain go on so long before I did something about it.”

A Helping Hand

If you experience unusual pain that goes undiagnosed, you may need a specialist. For a referral to a vascular surgeon on the medical staff at Baylor Hamilton Heart and Vascular Hospital or Baylor Dallas, call 1-800-4BAYLOR or visit FindDrRight.com.

Martha Ausburn

50-80%
Surgery successfully corrects thoracic outlet syndrome in a majority of patients.

20-50
The age at which most cases of thoracic outlet syndrome appear.

1st
An extra cervical rib above the first rib is often the cause of thoracic outlet syndrome.

0+
Thoracic outlet syndrome is more common in women than in men.
We know you’ve heard it before, but if you’re still a smoker, you need to hear it again. Smoking is the No. 1 cause of preventable death and disease in the United States. One in five deaths every year is caused by smoking-related complications, and heart disease is a significant one. That’s because smoking can cause a buildup of plaque in the arteries, which blocks blood flow and can also trigger a type of blood clot that causes heart attacks.

Although smoking is a risk factor all by itself, it can aggravate other risk factors for heart disease, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels, says Shyla High, M.D., a cardiologist on the medical staff at Baylor Hamilton Heart and Vascular Hospital and Baylor University Medical Center at Dallas. Smoking also makes it harder to exercise, an important component of good heart health.

Fortunately, quitting smoking delivers both immediate and long-term benefits. “Just 20 minutes after quitting, your blood pressure and pulse rate decrease,” Dr. High says. “After 24 hours, your risk of a heart attack decreases. And after 15 years, your risk of heart disease is reduced to that of people who never smoked.”

Some studies have shown that women are more dependent on the habit of smoking than the nicotine itself, so ask your doctor what quitting strategies may work best.

Most important, keep on quitting. “It takes most people about three attempts to quit for good,” Dr. High says. “But the benefits of quitting smoking are worth the effort.”
The family that plays together stays together, especially when everyone remains healthy. And when it comes to exercise that’s good for your heart, summer offers a wide range of family-friendly options.

“Exercise doesn’t have to be getting on a treadmill,” says Emily Malorzo, R.D., L.D., a registered dietitian at Baylor Hamilton Heart and Vascular Hospital. “Take advantage of the chance to get outdoors in the fresh air for some family activities.”

One great way to get the whole family moving and keep everyone motivated is to participate in a 5K. Whether you walk or run, these events are energy-charged days full of fun.

Bike riding, swimming, hiking, tennis, basketball and waterskiing are other summer activities Malorzo recommends as great forms of exercise. “Not only are you building and strengthening the heart, you’re burning calories, too,” she says.

The number of calories burned depends on your weight, age and how hard you’re exercising. Here are the average calories burned by a 150-pound adult female engaging in these activities for 30 minutes:

- Basketball – 350
- Biking (leisurely pace) – 188
- Hiking – 230
- Swimming – 180
- Tennis – 240
- Waterskiing – 240

For the most part, any kind of movement you do on a sustained basis will burn an average of 200 calories per half-hour, Malorzo says. “Whatever you do, make it something you can enjoy as a family or with friends,” she adds. “Exercise should be fun. The whole key is finding something you can stick with as part of a healthy lifestyle to prevent health problems in the future.”

As a mother, you’re always looking out for your children. And that includes safeguarding them from one of the biggest dangers facing kids today—childhood obesity.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 17 percent of children and adolescents are obese today, says Emily Malorzo, R.D., L.D., a registered dietitian at Baylor Hamilton Heart and Vascular Hospital. “That’s a pretty significant population,” she says. “Pediatricians are getting more involved in working with parents and families to cure this problem.”

Malorzo says the best thing parents can do is to set a good example. Start by making healthy eating a fun, family affair. Visit your local farmers market, and let your kids pick out fruits and vegetables they’ve never tried. When you get home, have them help you wash and prepare your fresh goodies.

Giving your kids a say in what’s for breakfast, lunch or dinner is another good way to get them actively involved. Let them choose the healthy options they like best.

Be sure to keep plenty of healthy snacks in the house, especially during the summer when your kids probably spend more time at home. Malorzo also suggests swapping sugary soda and sports drinks for fruit-infused water.

By thinking ahead and getting your kids involved, you can teach them to prevent obesity—for a lifetime. “It’s much easier to establish good habits at a young age,” Malorzo says, “instead of trying to change them later.”

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