

## Take Control of Your Health

The debate over health care reform dominates the news. While this continues, Americans need to realize that the only person who can truly impact one's own health is him or herself.

More times than not, physicians encounter patients who expect a prescription for a pill that will magically take care of all their ail-



ments. This is an unfortunate and unrealistic expectation. If patients and physicians work as a team, however, a patient's overall health can be greatly improved.

This month's issue serves as a reminder on how we should take responsibility for our own overall health.

## Time for a Check Up

Heart patients need to remember to have regular check ups with their physicians. It is important to regularly monitor a cardiac patient's blood pressure, weight, and symptoms.

For these appointments, always bring your medications (prescription, over the

counter, and herbal supplements). Also, remember to bring a list of questions that you may have for your provider.



Always respect your symptoms. Do not wait until your condition deteriorates before you see a doctor. The cost of an emergency room visit or a hospitalization is far greater than an office visit.

Cardiology of  
Virginia

13572 Waterford Place  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Phone: 804-560-8782

Fax: 804-525-2525

## Follow Up

Blood tests and x-rays are sometimes needed to help better evaluate a patient. The results of these types of tests are typically available within one week.

*If you do not hear about your lab or x-ray report from your physician's office, do not assume that your test results are normal.*

Sometimes correspondence from a doctor's office can be lost in the mail. Other times, there could be a delay in receiving test results from the laboratory or radiologist.

If more than one week has passed since your visit to the laboratory or radiology, please follow up with your

provider and request your test results. This will ensure that you receive your results and the health care that you deserve.

Your health is important to us. Physicians and patients need to share responsibilities in this partnership.



## The Internet and Your Health

On a daily basis, millions of people search the internet for information regarding their medical conditions. Some websites provide accurate, concise, and current information. Other websites are outdated and inaccurate.

When trying to determine if a website is reliable, it is important to consider both the source of the information provided (for example: is it an individual's experience, research from a government or university based program, or a pharmaceutical company) as well as how current is the information (when was the site last updated?).

We recommend the websites created by the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association respectively.

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) is a nonprofit medical society dedicated to promoting cardiovascular health and prevention of heart disease. CardioSmart, [www.cardiosmart.org](http://www.cardiosmart.org), offered by the ACC, is an educational website for patients with heart disease.

The American Heart Association is a national voluntary health agency committed to

help reduce disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke. The AHA's patient education website, "Heart Hub" at [www.americanheart.org/hearthub/index.htm](http://www.americanheart.org/hearthub/index.htm), includes information for both patients and their caregivers.

Health related websites are for informational purposes only and should not be considered as medical advice. Users of any website should always consult their healthcare providers for individual medical advice regarding the diagnosis and treatment of their medical conditions.

**Users of any website should always consult their healthcare providers for individual medical advice regarding the diagnosis and treatment of their medical conditions.**



## The Obesity Epidemic

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a useful screening tool to identify weight problems and other weight related health risks for adults. A BMI is calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilograms (1 kg = 2.2 lbs) by their height in meters squared. The resultant BMI (kg/m<sup>2</sup>) indirectly measures the amount of body fat for that individual.

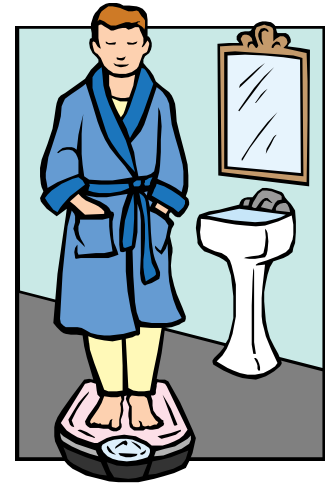
According to standard BMI charts, a BMI of 18.5-24.9 is normal weight, while BMI of 25-29 is considered overweight. A BMI greater than 30 is classified as obese.

A recent study published in the July 2009 Health Affairs (<http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/reprint/hlthaff.28.5.w822v2>) discussed the growing problem and cost of obesity in the United States. According to the CDC, obesity rates increased by 37% between 1998-2006. Corresponding with the increased number of obese Americans, annual health spending rose to \$147 billion (in comparison, the American Cancer Society spent \$43 billion to combat all types of cancer).

Overweight and obese patients are at a higher risk for high blood

pressure, diabetes mellitus type 2, stroke, and heart disease. In the eight years studied by the CDC, overweight and obese patients spent approximately \$1400 per year more on medical care than normal weight individuals.

We, as patients and physicians, need to take a look at this growing epidemic and work together to help stop obesity. Sustainable dietary modifications (smaller portions, low fat/salt) and exercise regimens are crucial for us all to have a healthier lifestyle.



**Overweight and obese patients are at a higher risk for high blood pressure, diabetes mellitus type 2, stroke, and heart disease.**

## Walking to a Better Health

Walking thirty minutes a day can help reduce your risk of obesity and heart disease. A moderate amount of daily exercise helps maintain your body weight which in turn will improve your blood pressure and lipid profile. Daily exercise will also decrease your risk of diabetes, osteoporosis, and some types of cancer.

The American Heart Association has created a *Summer Walking Guide* to help motivate Americans nationwide to start living healthier lifestyles.

To start your walking program, visit [www.mystartonline.org](http://www.mystartonline.org). On the website, tools are available for you to track your caloric intake and the distance

and time for each of your walks.

As always, talk to your physician before starting any exercise program.

