

 **healthy**heart  
BROUGHT TO YOU BY BLANCHARD VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM

## BVH HeartCare Center saves 'muscle'

The motto of Blanchard Valley Hospital's HeartCare Center is, "Time is muscle!" This means that every second counts when you're having a heart attack. With a door-to-angioplasty treatment time better than the national benchmark, the HeartCare Center definitely exceeded expectations in 2006.

For those experiencing the symptoms of a heart attack, the American College of Cardiology has set a national goal of 90 minutes or less to receive lifesaving treatment. BVH's HeartCare Center recorded an average time of 73 minutes for 2006, with a median time of 71 minutes.

Providing open-heart surgery in Findlay for the first time in late 2005, the HeartCare Center reported 109 open-heart surgeries in 2006, with 286 stent/balloon procedures.

**Chest pain? Aching arms or jaw? Shortness of breath? Nausea? These could be symptoms of a heart attack. Call 911 and get help fast. "Time is muscle!"**

  
**The HeartCare Center**  
Blanchard Valley Hospital  
*Close to your home. Near to your heart.*



## EXERCISE strategies

BEING ACTIVE IS GOOD FOR your health, and that includes your heart.

Just 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity most days of the week can provide cardiovascular fitness and help protect you from heart attack and stroke, the American Heart Association reports.

Of course, it's easy to know you ought to exercise more. The key is knowing just how to increase your activity. Try these ideas.

- Pick activities that are fun—you'll be more likely to stick with them. Doing a variety of activities can also help prevent boredom. Walk, bike, golf, mall walk or swim—whatever keeps you interested.
- Start out slowly. Don't exhaust yourself. Instead, gradually in-

crease how long and how hard you exercise.

- Keep track of your successes. Keep a record of your activity and don't forget to reward yourself along the way.

If you've "overdone" your exercise regimen, call Blanchard Valley Sports Medicine for a convenient appointment! 419-425-3199.

- Find chunks of time. If you can't manage 30 minutes all at once, try to get in two 15-minute sessions during the day.

Talk to your doctor before getting started if you haven't exercised in a long time or have any health problems.



## BVHS 'goes red!'

During February, Blanchard Valley Health System participated in the American Heart Association's "Go Red for Women" campaign. The purpose: to create awareness among local women of the signs and symptoms of heart disease.

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of American women, taking 480,000 of their lives annually. Because their heart attack symptoms may be more subtle than men's, women often don't seek help soon enough.

Blanchard Valley Health System piqued community interest with a series of "Love Your Heart" billboards featuring local women, including Brenda Roethlisberger, Findlay YMCA; Sammie Rhoades, Hope House; Chika Suzuki, nurse and Birchaven Village volunteer; Kay Miller, Bluffton school board; and Shirley Cole, nurse-midwife. A series of newspaper ads with educational messages followed the billboard campaign.



HEALTHY HEART is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of BLANCHARD VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM, 1900 S. Main St., Findlay, OH 45840-1214, 419-423-4500, [www.bvhealthsystem.org](http://www.bvhealthsystem.org).

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# guide TO CHOLESTEROL- LOWERING DRUGS

SOMETIMES A HEALTHIER DIET, exercise and weight loss aren't enough to keep your blood cholesterol level in check. You may also need to take one or more medications, such as:

**Statins**, which slow cholesterol production in the liver. Statins mainly lower bad LDL cholesterol.

Though most people don't have side effects, statins can cause upset stomach, gas, constipation and abdominal pain or cramps. If you notice muscle pain or weakness, call your doctor right away.

**Bile acid sequestrants**, which work by keeping cholesterol-laden bile acids in the intestines, where they can be eliminated from the body. Bile acid sequestrants help lower LDL cholesterol and are sometimes combined with a statin to further reduce LDL levels.

Side effects may include constipation, nausea and gas. Bile acid sequestrants can interfere with the

absorption of other drugs, so talk to your doctor about the best time to take medications.

**Nicotinic acid**, which is a form of vitamin B that helps lower LDL cholesterol and triglycerides. Nicotinic acid can also help raise good HDL levels.

People taking this medication may have hot flashes, nausea, indigestion, gas, vomiting, diarrhea or peptic ulcer problems. Nico-

tinic acid can also increase the effect of some high blood pressure medications.

**Fibrates**, which help lower triglyceride levels and help raise HDL levels. Though fibrates can help lower LDL levels in people with normal triglyceride levels, these medications may actually raise LDL levels in people with high triglycerides.

Most people can take fibrates with no problems. However, side effects may include indigestion, gallstones and muscle problems.

Source: National Cholesterol Education Program

Visit [www.bvhealthsystem.org](http://www.bvhealthsystem.org) for the dates of our low-cost health screenings.



# runaway HEARTBEATS

IF THE BEAT, BEAT, BEAT OF YOUR heart is irregular and rapid, you may have a condition known as atrial fibrillation (AF).

Atrial fibrillation is caused by a change in normal electrical signals that stimulate your heart's upper chambers, called atria. Erratic signals can stimulate the atria to contract faster than normal and cause the heart to beat 300 to 400 times per minute.

"Some people with AF don't have symptoms. Others may feel frequent palpitations, shortness of breath during exertion, chest pain, and episodes of dizziness or fainting. The irregular heartbeat may come and go, or it can be constant," says David Meier, M.D.

AF isn't life-threatening, but it should be treated. It can eventually weaken the heart muscle and cause lasting damage. It might lead to other rhythm problems, chronic fatigue, heart failure and, most dangerous of all, a stroke.

Your doctor may first prescribe medicines, such as aspirin or war-

farin, to prevent blood clots that could initiate a stroke. You may also benefit from electrical stimulation (cardioversion), a pacemaker or catheter ablation. Ablation uses focused energy to destroy areas of the heart that trigger abnormal electrical signals or to block incorrect signals from traveling through the heart.

Some people develop a condition similar to AF called atrial flutter (AFL). AFL is caused by a single electrical wave that typically circu-

Atrial fibrillation can cause frequent palpitations, shortness of breath and dizziness.

lates very rapidly in one atrium. It causes a very fast, steady heartbeat. It's most likely to occur following a heart attack or cardiac surgery.

Cardioversion and medications generally are used to treat AFL.

Sources: American Heart Association;  
Heart Rhythm Society

## Radio waves tune up the heart

A treatment called catheter ablation is commonly used for atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter.

Ablation helps in one of two ways:

- It destroys areas in the heart that trigger abnormal electrical signals.
- It creates a roadblock to stop abnormal signals from traveling through the heart.

During the procedure, a physician guides a long, thin tube called a catheter through your veins and into your heart. An electrode on the end of the catheter delivers energy to destroy the cells that are causing the heart to beat erratically.

Radiofrequency energy is often used for ablation. This type of ablation has a success rate higher than 90 percent and a low risk of complications. The process is painless.

Ablation is also done using micro-waves, sonar or cryo (freezing).

Sources: American Heart Association;  
Heart Rhythm Society

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## HOW DOCTORS USE ELECTROCARDIOGRAMS

YOU'VE SEEN THEM ON A ZILLION medical dramas, but what exactly are EKG machines? And when would you need to be hooked up to one?

EKG (also sometimes abbreviated as ECG) stands for electrocardiogram, which is a visible recording of the electrical activity of your heart.

Although you may not associate the body with electricity, the pumping action of the heart is controlled by small electrical impulses.

An EKG machine uses electrode pads—placed on the arms, legs and chest—to translate these impulses as

a series of peak-and-valley images on paper or on a screen.

EKGs can help detect:

- Abnormal heartbeats and rhythm problems (arrhythmias).
- Decreased blood or oxygen supply to the heart.
- Signs that a heart attack has occurred or may occur.
- Damage to the heart.
- Inflammation of the heart (myocarditis).

A doctor who suspects any of the conditions mentioned above can use an EKG to verify whether you have a problem.

If your physician suggests the test, don't hesitate to ask why and ask for more details about how it works.

For more on heart health, click on "Apple Gram" at [www.bvhealthsystem.org](http://www.bvhealthsystem.org).

Source: American Medical Association

## Learn how to take care of your heart

"Smart Hearts" isn't a program to develop intelligent valentines, but it can raise your heart IQ. "Smart Hearts" is a BVHS-sponsored group that meets monthly from October through May to learn about and discuss heart disease and healthy lifestyles.

According to Cathy Russell, R.N., cardiac rehabilitation director, the group continues to grow, with many participants who are former heart patients. Spouses are also welcome, as is anyone interested in heart health.

### What's New in Heart Care

**Monday, May 7, 7 p.m.**  
**Blanchard Valley Hospital's Poe Auditorium**

Although the April meeting is full, new members are welcome to attend in May when Cardiologist Jerome Beekman, M.D., will present.

### "Smart Hearts" Annual Picnic

**Tuesday, June 12, 5:30 p.m.**  
**Riverside Park Waterfall Pavilion**

Join us for food, fun and more at the group's annual picnic.



For more information on "Smart Hearts," contact Cathy Russell at **419-423-5153**.