



Making Communities

Healthier®

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NORTH ALABAMA MEDICAL CENTER/NORTH ALABAMA SHOALS HOSPITAL NEWS + WINTER/SPRING



How Healthy is Your Heart?

By Therese M. Lango, MD, Cardiologist

Your heart is one of the hardest working parts of your body. It's also one of the most threatened. In fact, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the U.S. – about one in four deaths. Additionally, in the U.S., someone has a heart attack every 40 seconds. And about one in five of those heart attacks is silent – meaning you may not be aware of damage to your heart that is happening or has already taken place.

That is why it is so important to stay on top of our heart health. Do you know how healthy your heart is? This American Heart Month, refresh yourself on a few key indicators that can give insight into your heart's current health state and point to any specific steps you may need to take for its care.

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Ask a dietitian

Shannon Robinette, MS, RD, LD, is the clinical nutrition manager and chief registered dietitian.



QUESTION: *Healthier eating is one of my goals for 2022. How can I make it happen?*

ANSWER: Healthy eating is a great goal for this or any year – it can reduce the risk of illness and disease, boost our energy and even help improve our mental health. Changing your eating habits can seem daunting but there are some ways you can make a healthy change in what you eat, including planning and preparing healthy meals for the week ahead of time (“meal prep”); stocking your kitchen with healthier basics to have on hand, like olive and canola oils, brown rice, whole grains, frozen veggies and lean chicken and fish; drinking lots of water; and eating a breakfast high in protein and fiber. Whatever steps you take, try not to be overwhelmed. Make one or two healthy changes a week instead of all at once. It's a small tip that can play a big role in ensuring your new healthy habits are here to stay. ■

Want to talk with a provider about your eating plan? Call 256.629.1000 or visit NAMCcares.com or NAMCShoals.com to make an appointment.



A note from the CEO

Happy New Year! As we take our first steps into 2022, I want to publicly thank our employees, providers and medical staff for their continued commitment to caring for those we serve. I also want to thank you for your continued support of our efforts and for all that you have done and are doing to help get us closer to an end to the COVID-19 pandemic, including getting vaccinated and boosted and wearing your mask when appropriate.

It has certainly been a challenging couple of years for ours and other communities around the world, and we couldn't do what we do without our staff and without fellow community members like you. We are so proud to call this community home, and we are honored that you continue to trust us with your care.

This year, as always, we will continue to be there for you and your families' healthcare needs and the overall well-being of our community as we advance our mission of Making Communities Healthier.

Wishing you health and happiness in 2022,

Russell Pigg

Continued from cover

Cholesterol is a substance that circulates in your blood and comes in two different types – LDL (also known as the “bad” kind) and HDL (known as the “good” kind). HDL cholesterol transports the LDL cholesterol from your arteries to the liver, where it is flushed from your body. Too much of the LDL or not enough of the HDL increases your risk for build-up and blockage in your arteries, potentially leading to heart attack or stroke. Knowing your cholesterol numbers is one of the key ways to assess your heart health and one of the most manageable factors in terms of lowering your risk for disease. Targets for healthy cholesterol levels can vary based on age and gender but a general rule of thumb for adults is to aim for 125-200 mg/dL.

Blood pressure is just what it says – it measures the pressure or force of blood within your arteries. Like cholesterol, there are two different numbers – your systolic pressure (the higher of the two numbers) measures your blood pressure when your heart beats and your diastolic pressure (the lower of the two numbers) measures your blood's pressure when your heart is resting between beats. A normal blood pressure reading is less than 120 systolic and less than 80 diastolic. Readings above these levels would be considered elevated or high, including hypertension when readings are 130/80 or above. High blood pressure can be a significant contributor to and sign of serious heart issues. Unfortunately, it is an all too common condition, affecting nearly half of American adults according to the American Heart Association, and presenting no symptoms the majority of the time. Because there are often no clear-cut symptoms, it's important to get your blood pressure checked. Fortunately, high blood pressure can be lowered and managed with the proper care.

Waist size can also be a harbinger for heart health and a predictor of heart problems. A study by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute showed that men with a waist size larger than 40 inches and women with a waist size greater than 35 inches are at higher risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes. The good news is that healthy eating and physical activity can help you lower and maintain a healthy waist size and stay on the road to good heart health.

Risk factors like high cholesterol and blood pressure can also run in your family, so knowing your family's heart health history can help you stay alert to your own health risks. And while these aren't the only markers on the map to good heart health, they are key factors in determining how healthy your heart is and your risk for heart issues now or down the road. Your primary care provider can check these numbers for you – including during your annual check-up – and work with you on a plan to make any changes necessary to get you back on track, whether it's simple lifestyle changes or medication if necessary.

How healthy is your heart? Know your numbers so you can know how to stay on the road to good heart health. ■

Need help to know your heart? You can count on us. From primary care to heart services, we're here for you with high-quality, compassionate care when you and your family need it. Call 256.629.1000 or visit [NAMCcares.com](https://www.namccares.com) or [NAMCShoals.com](https://www.namcshoals.com) and click on Find a Doctor to make an appointment.

For more information on heart health, visit [heart.org](https://www.heart.org)

You can also take our free heart health assessment by visiting [NAMCcares.com/cardiology](https://www.namccares.com/cardiology) or [NAMCShoals.com/heart-ct-for-calcium-scoring](https://www.namcshoals.com/heart-ct-for-calcium-scoring)



Mission Moment

Drs. Sindhoora Adyanthaya, Sangeetha Isaac, and Sucheta Kundu

Three of NAMC's internal medicine residents competed in the Southern Society of General Internal Medicine Doctor's Dilemma and won first place. Some of the brightest residents from the southern region of the U.S. competed in this test of medical knowledge.

Congratulations to Drs. Sindhoora Adyanthaya, Sangeetha Isaac, and Sucheta Kundu. Team NAMC will now go to the nationals to represent the south at the annual SGIM contest April 6–9 in Orlando, Fla. The SGIM competition will be the first of two national competitions for this team of outstanding physicians. ■

Is It Time for a Colonoscopy?

If you're 45 or older, yes. A colonoscopy is a simple and effective procedure which serves two very important purposes: it helps to find colorectal cancer quickly and early so that it can be treated much more easily, and it helps to prevent colorectal cancer by identifying and removing any colorectal polyps before they become cancerous.

The American Cancer Society now recommends that adults should begin colorectal screening at age 45. If you have a higher than average risk for colorectal cancer, you may need to start sooner and get tested more frequently. You should talk with your doctor about your risks and when a screening might be right for you. To find a provider, call **256.629.1000** or visit **NAMCcares.com** or **NAMCShoals.com** and click on Find a Doctor to get connected to a healthcare provider who can help you schedule this important screening. ■



Managing Your Medications Safely

Medications can be a great tool to help us heal and get healthy again, but they can also pose a serious health risk when misused or handled improperly. There are some simple steps you can take to practice medication safety:

- Take your medications only as directed by your provider and for the intended purpose.
- Properly store your medications, with relocked caps on bottles and in a safe place out of reach of children and out of sight of friends and guests.
- Don't share your medications with others.
- Safely dispose of unused or expired medications to help prevent accidental poisoning, and overdose or abuse.

If you need to safely dispose of unused or expired meds, medication drop boxes are an easy and convenient way to do so, and they're free and anonymous. Visit [fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-drug-take-back-locations](https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-drug-take-back-locations) to find one near you. ■



North Alabama
MEDICAL CENTER

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North Alabama
SHOALS HOSPITAL

201 W. Avalon Avenue
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Tropical Green Smoothie

Kickstart your day the healthy way!

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2 handfuls spinach | $\frac{3}{4}$ cup frozen mango chunks |
| 1 cup coconut water | $\frac{1}{2}$ medium banana |
| 1 tbsp flax seeds | 2 cups ice |
| 1 tsp honey | |
| 1 medium orange | |

1. In a food processor or blender, process the spinach, water, seeds and honey until blended.
2. Add the orange, mango and banana. Process until smooth.
3. Add the ice, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup at a time, until the desired consistency.

Makes 2 servings.

*Recipe from the American Heart Association.
Find more healthy recipes at heart.org/recipes



Meet Vic Liengswangwong, MD

We would like to welcome Dr. Vic as our radiation oncologist at North Alabama Cancer Center at NAMC.

If you need a healthcare provider, call **256.629.1000** or visit **NAMCCares.com** or **NAMCShoals.com** and click on Find a Doctor. ■

*DISCLAIMER: *The information and practices described in this newsletter are not intended as substitutes for a diagnosis or clinical or medical advice prescribed by a medical provider for an individual patient that is based on the individual's history, condition and current medical assessment. This information is not intended to be comprehensive about the subjects addressed and may include information that is time-sensitive and subject to change.*