

# healthy heart

HEALTH NEWS AND INFORMATION

## Heart attack signs

Don't wait to call for help if you experience these signs of a heart attack:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or that goes away and comes back.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs, such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or light-headedness.

Source: American Heart Association

## Device can restore normal heartbeat

An automated external defibrillator (AED) can restore a normal heartbeat and save a life during an emergency.

Found in some public places, an AED is a small, lightweight device that delivers a shock into the chest by means of electrode pads.

AEDs automatically determine whether a person needs defibrillation. The device then prompts the operator through the process. Anyone trained to use CPR can learn to use an AED.

Source: American Heart Association



## heart attack

### ANGIOPLASTY SAVES LIVES

WHEN YOU ARE HAVING A HEART attack, every minute counts. That's why angioplasty is the heart attack treatment of choice at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick.

During a heart attack, blood flow to part of the heart is blocked and heart muscle begins to die. A growing body of research shows that moving people to angioplasty as soon as symptoms start saves heart muscle and improves chances for survival.

During angioplasty, a thin tube called a catheter is threaded to the blocked artery. This catheter has a balloon on its tip, which is inflated to open the blockage.

Because emergency angioplasty requires special equipment, x-ray capabilities and specialists available around the clock, not all hospitals



offer this procedure.

At hospitals where emergency angioplasty is not offered, doctors may elect to use thrombolytic drugs (clot busters) to dissolve the blood clot. When available, however, angioplasty is preferred.

Not everyone is a candidate for angioplasty. Certain types of blockages may require bypass surgery. Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital is one of a limited number of hospitals that perform both emergency angioplasty and cardiac surgery.

If you are having a heart attack, dial **911** and get to the nearest hospital that offers 24-hour emergency cardiac care. But if possible, get to a hospital that treats heart attacks with angioplasty first and also has cardiac surgery capabilities.

# HEALTHY facts

**HEAVY DRINKING MAKES HEART ATTACKS MORE DEADLY**  
A history of binge drinking (three or more alcoholic drinks within a two-hour period) nearly doubles your risk of dying if you have a heart attack. Even occasional binges appear to be risky.

Source: American Heart Association Scientific Sessions

**WOMEN SLOW TO GET HELP THEY NEED DURING A HEART ATTACK**  
Women having heart attacks don't get angioplasty, an artery-opening procedure, as quickly as men in the same situation. They also tend to wait an average of 20 minutes longer to seek medical help during a heart attack compared with men. Quicker treatment might help more women survive a heart attack.

Source: American Heart Association Scientific Sessions



## healthyheart

HEALTHY HEART is published as a community service by Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick. One Robert Wood Johnson Place, New Brunswick, NJ 08903. Hospital main number: (732) 828-3000. Web address: [www.rwjuh.edu](http://www.rwjuh.edu). E-mail us at [healthyheart@rwjuh.edu](mailto:healthyheart@rwjuh.edu).

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# tired legs?

Questions about PAD? Call the Vascular Center of New Jersey at RWJUH at **(732) 235-7816** for appointments and consultations.

ARE YOUR LEGS GETTING THE oxygen they need? If they seem to tire out or cramp during physical activity, they might not be.

"Fatigue and pain in the legs during exercise can signal claudication, one of the early symptoms of a condition called peripheral arterial disease (PAD)," says Alan M. Graham, M.D., medical director of the Vascular Center of New Jersey at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital.

PAD is a serious disorder. Fortunately, it can be easily diagnosed with a simple test.

## Blocked arteries to blame

Fatty deposits can build up in the walls of your arteries and restrict the circulation of blood and oxygen.

When it occurs in arteries leading to your heart, it's called coronary artery disease. When it occurs in the arteries that lead to your lower body, it's PAD.

Besides pain or fatigue, other symptoms of PAD include coldness, numbness or tingling, and loss of color in the feet or legs.

Left untreated, PAD can lead to gangrene or amputation. People with PAD are also likely to have blocked arteries elsewhere, raising the risk for heart attack and stroke.

## Diagnosis and treatment

A simple check of the blood flow to your lower limbs can help your doctor find out if you have PAD.

Called an ankle-brachial index, it compares the blood pressure in your legs to that in your arms.

In most cases, PAD can be treated with changes in lifestyle, such as:

- Quitting smoking.
- Controlling diabetes.
- Controlling high blood pressure.
- Beginning an exercise program.
- Eating a low-fat diet.

You may also need drugs to fight clots and to lower cholesterol.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Heart Association; Society for Interventional Radiology



# UNDERSTANDING angioplasty

SOMETIMES AN ANGIOPLASTY IS needed to reopen arteries in the heart that are clogged with fatty deposits.

This procedure uses a thin catheter, or tube, with a tiny balloonlike device on the end. The catheter is threaded through an artery to the narrowed blood vessel in the heart. The balloon is then briefly inflated to reopen the artery.

## Before the procedure

Sometimes angioplasty is an emergency and needs to be done immediately. But if it isn't an emergency, there will be several steps to go through before the actual procedure.

You might need to meet with a heart specialist for a physical exam, blood tests, chest x-ray and other tests for your heart. Your doctor can

Join a heart support group today. Call **(732) 418-8110** for information.

also explain angioplasty to you in more detail.

You will also be told:

- How many hours before the procedure you should stop eating or drinking.
- Which medications to take (or

skip) prior to the angioplasty.

- When to come to the hospital and where to go once you get there.

## What to expect

You are able to be awake during angioplasty. You may only need a local anesthetic. The doctor can also give you a sedative to help you relax. Once you are ready, the angioplasty should take just an hour or two.

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital performs more than 10,000 cardiac catheterizations, angioplasties and electrophysiology studies each year—more than any other hospital in New Jersey.

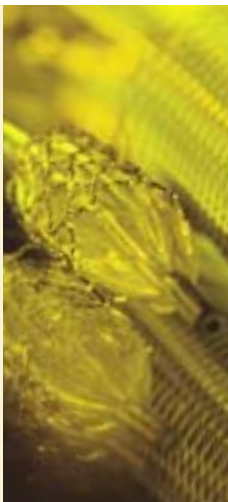
## Stents prop open arteries in the heart

Even after angioplasty, blood vessels might narrow again. To help prevent this problem, called restenosis, your doctor may use a stent, a tiny mesh tube.

The stent is inserted during angioplasty along with the balloon-tipped catheter. When the balloon expands, the stent expands. And the stent stays inside

the blood vessel permanently to help prop it open. Most angioplasties now include the use of a stent.

Restenosis can occur even when a stent is in place. However, restenosis rates with a stent can be less than



10 percent, compared with about 40 percent among those who have balloon angioplasty alone.

To help prevent restenosis, stents used at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital are coated with a medication that helps keep blood vessels from closing again.

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## HEALTHY. recipe

### Italian pasta

#### Ingredients

- 6 cups water
- 2 cups bow-tie or medium-shell pasta
- ½ teaspoon bottled minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 cups torn fresh spinach
- 1 cup torn radicchio
- ¼ cup shredded or grated Parmesan cheese

#### Instructions

1. In a large saucepan, bring water to a boil over high heat.
2. Add pasta.
3. Reduce heat and boil gently, uncovered, about 8 minutes.
4. Drain.
5. In a small skillet, cook garlic in oil over medium heat until tender (1 minute). Stir in vinegar.
6. Place spinach and radicchio in a large bowl. Add hot pasta. Pour hot garlic mixture over pasta and spinach, tossing to mix well.
7. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Makes five 1-cup servings.

# patient safety

## NOT ALL HOSPITALS ARE ALIKE

IN A NATIONAL SURVEY TO determine the “50 exceptional hospitals” for patient care, *Consumers Digest* magazine has ranked Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick fifth in the nation.

“The survey looked at the complete patient care picture—everything from the way doctors manage intensive care units to the performance of selected high-risk procedures,” says Peter Amenta, M.D., RWJUH senior vice president for medical affairs and chief of staff. “Being included among the top five hospitals in the nation by

*Consumers Digest* demonstrates that Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital is a leader in patient safety. Not only that, this distinction illustrates our commitment to excellence and patient care.”

*Consumers Digest* derived its rankings from a survey of hospitals by the Leapfrog Group

For a copy of the  
*Consumers Digest* article,  
call **1-800-242-0022**.

([www.leapfroggroup.org](http://www.leapfroggroup.org)), a coalition of some of the nation’s largest corporations formed to bring about advances in patient safety.

The Leapfrog Group gives high marks to hospitals with extensive experience with select high-risk conditions and procedures, including two cardiac procedures performed extensively at RWJUH: coronary artery bypass graft and percutaneous coronary intervention.

In addition to RWJUH, the top five listing of exceptional hospitals also included Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women’s Hospital, both in Boston.



#### Nutrition facts (per serving)

Calories 306	Calories from fat 62
Percent Daily Value*	
Total fat 3g	5%
Cholesterol 4mg	1%
Sodium 114mg	5%
Carbohydrate 42g	14%
Protein 10g	
Percent of calories from fat 11	

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Recipe from the American Heart Association Quick & Easy Cookbook (Random House, 1995). Reprinted with permission.