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Subscription rates:

\$15.00 for 6 months (6 issues)

\$25 for 12 months (12 issues)

LA Health News is published monthly by
LA Health News
3183 Wilshire Blvd.,
196-K23, Los Angeles CA 90010

Telephone 323-297-4001

Fax: 323-297-4022

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PROUD MEMBER OF:



editor's letter

Holiday Heart; Eye To Eye

Cold weather and some holiday-related behaviors can exacerbate existing heart conditions, and deaths from heart disease hit their peak every December and January, with spikes on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, according to a University of California-San Diego study.

There are several weather-related factors that affect heart health, Dr. Cam Patterson, chief of cardiology and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill said. Exposure to cold weather can increase blood pressure, which stresses the heart. Blood also becomes thicker in the cold, which can increase the risk of clotting. And lower temperatures lead the blood vessels to constrict, which reduces blood flow. All three of those factors can combine to spell disaster for someone with heart disease, he said.

People tend to drink more than usual during the holidays as well, which can lead to something doctors refer to as "holiday heart" -- a rapid, irregular heart-beat called atrial fibrillation, caused when alcohol irritates the muscle of the heart's top chamber.

Changes in diet can also have an impact that sticks around well past January. For adults, most of their weight gain comes during the holidays, Patterson said, and that extra weight tends to still be there by the same time next year.

There's plenty that can be done in advance to avoid visiting an ER during the holidays. The best thing you can do is pay attention to your portion sizes during meals. Patterson suggests putting healthy items on your plate first, leaving less room for unhealthy options. He also recommends choosing a few special days for dietary splurges, rather than a few weeks. "Don't think of it as a holiday season, think of it as a holiday."

Longer term, a regular exercise routine

Eye surgery: it's not just Lasik anymore

will help you stay heart-healthy throughout the year. And it's always important to know your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers, Patterson said. Keeping track of these health statistics can help catch heart problems early.

And now, on a personal note, I have decided this upcoming year to implement a few personal changes, which I will document in upcoming issues of **LA Health News**. The first major change will be to undergo eye surgery. My eyesight is extremely bad, and after wearing contact lenses for over 25 years, I decided to look into surgical options.

The procedure recommended to me by my doctor, **Dr. Rajesh Khanna M.D.**, is something called Presbyopic Lens Exchange (PRELEX). It is a refractive eye procedure in which the natural lens of the eye is replaced with an artificial lens that corrects presbyopia. PRELEX is a good choice if you are severely nearsighted or farsighted.

I will be writing more about my experience with this procedure next month. If you would like to learn more now, visit Dr. Khanna's web site: www.khannainstitute.com

Mark Ariel
Editor-In-Chief