



## Are You Heart Smart?

By T. Eric Bowen, MD, FACC, Interventional Cardiologist

We often refer to the center of something as its heart. There's a reason for that. Your physical heart is right at the center of how your body functions – working around the clock to keep you going strong. While it's one of the most important parts, it's one of the most vulnerable, too. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the U.S., according to the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In fact, one in four U.S. deaths – about 655,000 – each year are a result of heart disease.

That's why it's critical to stay alert to the signs and symptoms of heart attacks – including some less obvious ones, understand how symptoms can sometimes differ between men and women, and know what to do when an attack strikes and minutes matter.

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## Ask a Doc

**J. Scott  
Featherston, DO,**  
is a family medicine  
physician.



**QUESTION:** *Is it safe to donate blood right now?*

**ANSWER:** Yes, and it's a needed donation. Donating blood products is a key part of a community's ability to stay healthy. In fact, a one-time donation can save the lives of up to three people. And convalescent plasma from the blood donations of recovered COVID-19 patients has been shown

to help lessen the severity or length of COVID-19 illness in some hospitalized patients. The American Red Cross has a number of safety protocols in place to ensure the safety of donors, volunteers, employees and blood recipients. Visit [redcrossblood.org](https://redcrossblood.org) to learn more about them and find a donation spot near you.

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## What to look for

Common heart attack symptoms can include:

- **Chest discomfort** – Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** This can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath** with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs**, including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

## Symptoms in women vs. men

Women can sometimes experience heart attack symptoms differently from men. While the most common symptom for both men and women is chest pain or discomfort, women are somewhat more likely to experience some of the other common – and more subtle – symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, unusual fatigue, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain (sometimes without any obvious chest discomfort).

It isn't just heavy smokers, stressed out or overweight people who can suffer a heart attack. Otherwise healthy people – who may write their condition off as something else like the flu, abnormal indigestion, an unusually stressful time or fatigue that just doesn't "feel right" – can delay potentially life-saving care and suffer a heart attack. Stay alert to some of these overlooked symptoms and get them checked out to see what may be going on.

## What to do for your heart

In the event of a heart-related emergency like a heart attack, it's critical to know the signs and symptoms and call 9-1-1. Acting quickly may save a life, including your own. Every minute matters.

It's also important to note that you don't have to experience any of the warning signs to address your heart health. Even without obvious symptoms, you could be at risk. It's a good idea to talk with your provider about risk factors, preventive actions and care options and how you can keep your heart healthy for the long run. In fact, your annual check-up is a great time to take screening tests like BMI, blood pressure, cholesterol and fasting blood glucose; discuss any concerning results; and work with your provider to develop any necessary lifestyle changes or begin taking any medications to help you manage a risk factor. Heart disease can contribute to a higher risk of complications from COVID-19, so it's especially important right now to stay on top of your heart health.

National Park Medical Center is here for you, too. We are home to the Heart and Vascular Center of Central Arkansas, and we're committed to the health of your heart. If you think you may be having a heart-related emergency, it's crucial to not delay care – even during a pandemic. We have a number of safety measures in place to protect you when you are seeking medical attention. You can learn more about those at [NationalParkMedical.com/covid-faq](https://NationalParkMedical.com/covid-faq)

If you'd like to make an appointment with a provider to talk about your heart health, call 877.320.3222, or visit [NationalParkMedical.com](https://NationalParkMedical.com) and click on the Find a Doctor tab.

Our heart works hard for us, so we should do what we can to be smart, stay alert to danger and help keep it healthy. ■

## A note from the CEO

2020 was certainly one of the most challenging years any of us have faced in our lifetime. As I've mentioned before, I believe our fight against COVID-19 has made us stronger, safer and able to care for you better than ever. If you're like me, the turning over of a fresh page on the calendar invites hope for the days ahead and a new determination to be the best we can be. As we launch into 2021, we will continue to work hard to be a safe place where you choose to come for healthcare.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a greater emphasis on public health around the world, including our own community, and it has also reminded us all of how important it is to take care of our personal health.

This issue of *Making Communities Healthier* is packed with information to help you get your year off to a healthy start, including essential knowledge on heart health, colonoscopies, healthy sleep, good nutrition and more. This year, as always, it is our privilege to be here to help you on your health journey and we continue to be grateful that you trust us with your care. ■

Sincerely,

Scott Smith, CEO

## MARCH IS NUTRITION MONTH

Follow these helpful ideas to get the most out of March:

- **Incorporate** all of the food groups in your diet
- **Be thoughtful** about consuming what you eat
- **Prepare** weekly meals ahead of time to support healthy eating habits
- **Get creative** and look for ways to repurpose ingredients

For more tips on





## Mission Moment

Matt McFarland, RN  
EMERGENCY  
DEPARTMENT NURSE  
AND DAISY AWARD  
WINNER

Matt McFarland, RN, was recently recognized as National

Park Medical Center's Inaugural DAISY award recipient. The DAISY award recognizes excellence in nursing.

Matt was nominated by a patient who described McFarland as "an amazing nurse" with excellent bedside manner. "He is not in this for the money. He is in this because he cares about people. Matt has always treated me like a person and has told me he was proud of my sobriety. Never has he once looked down on me. He goes above and beyond for his patients."

To nominate another excellent nurse, visit [NationalParkMedical.com/thank](http://NationalParkMedical.com/thank). ■

## Colonoscopies 101

Did you know that – except for skin cancers – colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed in the U.S.? Most of these cancers occur in people 50 and older, but it can happen at any age. Fortunately, the overall incidence of – and death rates associated with – colorectal cancers has been on the decline. That's thanks in large part to effective colonoscopy screenings that can catch the disease early.

According to the American Cancer Society, you should start getting screened at age 45. Those with higher than average risk may need to start sooner and get tested more frequently and/or with specific tests.

Colonoscopies are an essential part of our ability to find colorectal cancer quickly and early and treat it much more easily. This simple procedure also aids in prevention, by identifying and removing colorectal polyps before they become cancerous.

Talk to your provider about your risks and discuss when a colonoscopy could be right for you.

If you'd like to schedule a screening, call 877.320.3222, or visit [NationalParkMedical.com](http://NationalParkMedical.com) and click on the Find a Doctor tab to get yours on the calendar. ■

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of what you eat while wasting the least:

daily diet

already have before buying more

ave time and keep you accountable to

ose leftovers into brand new meals

n eating smart, visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).



## Meet Keith Thomae, MD, FACS

Dr. Keith Thomae is a board-certified general surgeon, specializing in vascular procedures, as well as GERD/Reflux treatments in addition to other general surgeries. Dr. Thomae joined Surgery Specialists of Hot Springs this year, bringing more than 20 years of clinical experience with him. Dr. Thomae is accepting new patients. Appointments may be made by calling 501.623.9300. ■



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Hot Springs, AR 71901

## Crock Pot Spinach Lasagna

Warm up your winter nights with this lighter take on a comfort food classic.

9 lasagna noodles  
(gluten-free) (can also use  
whole-wheat lasagna if  
preferred)

1 24-1/2 oz 24 1/2 oz  
jarred lower-sodium pasta  
tomato sauce

1 10 oz package frozen  
spinach (chopped, thawed  
and drained)

1-1/4 cup part-skim  
mozzarella cheese,  
shredded

1 cup low-fat ricotta  
cheese

Non-stick cooking spray

1/4 cup Parmesan cheese,  
freshly grated

1 8 oz can no-salt-added  
tomato sauce

1. Spray a crock pot with cooking spray
2. In a medium bowl, mix together ricotta cheese, Parmesan cheese, 1/4 cup of the mozzarella cheese and spinach.
3. Spread 1 cup pasta sauce on bottom of crock pot. Arrange three noodles side by side on top of sauce (break noodles apart to fit, if needed).
4. Spread about 1/3 cup of ricotta-spinach mixture on top of noodles. Repeat layering with pasta sauce, noodles and ricotta-spinach mixture two more times. Top with remaining pasta sauce and canned tomato sauce. Sprinkle top with remaining 1 cup of mozzarella cheese.
5. Place cover on crock pot. Cook on low setting for 2-3 hours or until done (cooking times vary based on crock pot).

\*Recipe from the American Diabetes Association. Find more healthy recipes at [www.diabetesfoodhub.org/recipes](http://www.diabetesfoodhub.org/recipes).

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## Ask A Doctor

**QUESTION:** *How can I get a better night's sleep?*

**ANSWER:** Sleep is one of the best things you can do for your mental and physical health. That includes your heart, which benefits from the lowered blood pressure that happens when you drift off. Some things you can do to help ensure a deep and relaxing sleep include: removing any unnecessary distractions from your bedroom (like work, social media, screens, etc.); creating an optimal environment like a cool, dark room; having a relaxation routine before bedtime; and establishing a routine bedtime and wake-up time each day. If you continue having trouble sleeping, you should talk to your provider about any potential sleep disorder issues or consider making an appointment with a sleep specialist who can help. Need a provider? Call 877.320.3222, or visit [NationalParkMedical.com](http://NationalParkMedical.com) and click on the Find a Doctor tab to get connected with the right care for you. ■

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.