

*The Comfort of Home®*

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Fainting, Falls & High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure (140/90 mmHg or higher) is one of the three leading causes of **heart failure**. It is referred to as “the silent killer” because it usually has no specific symptoms and no early warning signs. Both you and the senior in your care should have your blood pressure checked regularly.

In addition, having high blood pressure (hypertension) increases someone’s chances of having a **heart attack** or **stroke**. Medicines, called *anti-hypertensives*, that lower blood pressure can help prevent these happening. But these drugs can cause balance problems and dizziness, leading to falls and injuries.

High blood pressure affects many older people, whose bones tend to be weaker, and for whom a fall injury—such such as a broken bone—can have serious health consequences.

Researchers studied whether there was any link between the number of people taking blood pressure drugs and the number of people who had serious falls. Compared with people *not* taking blood pressure drugs, those taking the drugs were more likely to have a serious fall.

Monitor blood pressure readings if the person in your care is on medications to lower his/her blood pressure. A simple-to-use blood pressure cuff reading at home



gives a much better picture than the readings taken at trips to the doctor’s office. Remember to keep a record of the readings to take to the doctor for review. If systolic blood pressure (the top number) is lower than 85, contact the doctor. He or she may want to lower the dose of certain medications to prevent these low blood pressure readings. By doing this, the person’s “dizziness” may improve. But remember, you or the person in your care, should **NEVER change medications without the doctor’s advice.**

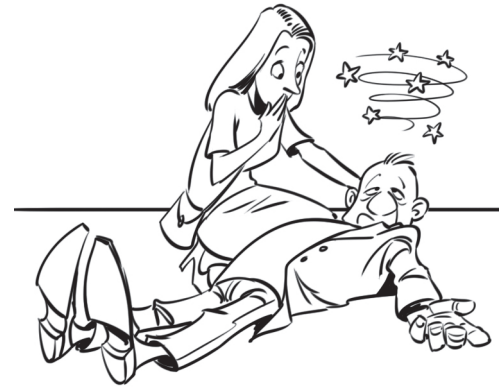
Severe chest pain is not always present with a heart attack, especially for older adults, people with diabetes, and women. They may experience sudden shortness of breath, coughing, dizziness, fatigue or weakness. Don’t take a chance. Call 9-1-1.

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## Fainting

Fainting can be caused by—

- a heart attack
- medications
- low blood sugar
- standing up quickly
- straining to have a bowel movement
- dehydration
- a change in blood pressure



### Sometimes, fainting can be prevented.

- ☛ Ask the doctor if medications that do not cause fainting can be prescribed.
- ☛ Monitor blood sugar levels.
- ☛ Monitor blood pressure.
- ☛ Avoid constipation.
- ☛ Do not let the person stand up or sit up too rapidly.

### If a fainting spell occurs:

1. Do not try to place the person in a sitting position. Instead, immediately lay him down flat.
2. Check the person's airway, breathing, and pulse.
3. Turn the person on his side.
4. Elevate the legs.
5. Cover him with a blanket if the room or floor is cold.
6. Do not give fluids.
7. Call 911 if person is having difficulty breathing, or is not breathing or not responding to your voice and touch.
8. If not breathing, be prepared to give Rescue Breathing and start CPR as instructed in CPR class.

Source: *The Comfort of Home for Chronic Heart Failure: A Guide for Caregivers*

## FAST FACT

More than 15 million Americans suffer from coronary artery disease—the No. 1 killer of both men and women in the U.S. Some 525,000 Americans suffer a *first* heart attack each year. More men than women have heart attacks, and they have them at a younger age. But after menopause, rates of heart disease in women increase two to three times—and their risk of a heart attack rises dramatically.

Source: *Berkeley Wellness Alerts*

## Taking Care of Yourself—A Bad Marriage Can Lead to a Broken Heart

A study of married couples in their 70s and 80s shows that older couples in an unhappy marriage have a higher risk of heart disease. Negative marriage qualities—such as having a critical spouse—have a bigger effect on heart health than positive marital qualities. The study concluded that being in an unhappy marriage caused stress, which can be harmful to cardiovascular health. The study emphasizes the need for marriage counseling as marriages grow older, not just in their early stages.

Source: [theglobeandmail.com](http://theglobeandmail.com)



## Don't Delay in Going to the Hospital

One of the reasons women die more often than men following a heart attack is that women wait longer to go to the hospital. More heart muscle has already died by the time they receive treatment.

Source: *Strong Women, Strong Hearts* by Miriam E. Nelson, PhD.; Penguin Group

## Live Life Laughing!

How was your doctor's visit?

Terrible, he said my blood work looked really yucky.



## Inspiration

Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.

Margaret Mead

## Don't Fall, Be Safe – Dizziness

Dizziness can mean different things—balance problems, feeling faint, light-headed, weak, or unsteady. Some causes are minor problems, some are serious and even life-threatening. If you feel dizzy regularly and you do not know why you are dizzy, you should see your doctor to get it checked out.

*The Comfort of Home*®

### **Our Purpose**

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

### **Ordering Info**

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## **SAFETY TIPS—Water Therapy**

Water therapy is a time-tested form of healing. It is also a safe way for a person with a disability to exercise because there is no danger of falling. Floating in water allows easy movement and little strain on joints and muscles.

Using a kickboard or simply walking in place in water may produce aerobic benefit. Water also resists movement so it produces increased heart rate in less time. Water can also be a good place to exercise for those with balance problems. Talk to a physical therapist about whether a water aerobics class might be appropriate for the person in your care. YMCAs often offer water aerobics classes for people of all abilities.



NEXT ISSUE... FIRE SAFETY—SMOKE DETECTORS—YOUR FIRST DEFENSE