



Saint Anthony's Offers Cholesterol Screenings at Discounted Rate

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In recognition of National Cholesterol Education Month, area residents will be able to have their cholesterol and glucose numbers checked at screenings on Tuesday, September 24 in the lobby of Saint Anthony's Health Center at #1 Saint Anthony's Way, and Thursday, September 26 in the lobby of Saint Clare's Hospital, 915 East Fifth Street. Screening times each day: 12:30 to 2 p.m.

The discounted screening fee for Cholesterol Month is \$5. Free blood pressures screenings will also be available.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Americans are making progress in their cholesterol health. Compared to previous decades, fewer adults have high cholesterol. The proportion of the population ages 20-74 with high cholesterol has dropped by half, from 33% in 1960-1962 to 16.3% in 2003-2006.

"Knowing the facts about cholesterol can reduce your risk for a heart attack or stroke," says Laura Fowler, RN, Coordinator of Saint Anthony's Cardiovascular Lab. "But understanding what cholesterol is and how it affects your health are only the beginning."

High cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke, she says. "As your blood cholesterol rises, so does your risk of coronary heart disease. If you have other risk factors (such as high blood pressure or diabetes) as well as high cholesterol, this risk increases even more," notes Fowler. The more risk factors a person has, the greater the chance of developing coronary heart disease.

She say that HDL (high-density lipoprotein), commonly known as the good cholesterol, is considered protective of the heart in several ways. "HDL's most important role may be what's known as *reverse cholesterol transport* – moving LDL cholesterol out of blood vessels before it can form fatty deposits," Fowler says. HDL also helps keep

blood vessels dilated and is believed to have anti-clotting, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.

Keeping HDL high is now considered at least as important as keeping LDL (low density lipoprotein – bad cholesterol) low, she notes.

According to guidelines of the National Cholesterol Education Project, HDL should be at least 40 mg/dL (50 for a female), and anything lower is abnormal and considered an independent risk factor for heart disease. Even in persons with normal or very low LDL and total cholesterol, the risk of heart disease is increased when HDL is too low.

According to the American Heart Association, individuals can keep their cholesterol levels under control by:

- schedule a screening
- eat foods low in cholesterol and saturated fat
- maintain a healthy weight
- exercise regularly
- follow your healthcare professional's advice

“New research shows that *every* minute of exercise counts -- even if you do it for one minute at a time all day. It adds to your total exercise time,” she adds, noting that moderate physical activity can help raise HDL.

The fingerstick screening at Saint Anthony’s includes glucose, total and HDL cholesterol levels as well as the total/HDL ratio.

For more information on the cholesterol screening or information about early heart attack care, please call 618-465-2264.