

SPRING 2022

# HealthSmarts

## Protect Your Mental Health

Depression and anxiety screening are an important Medicare benefit

## Hot Topics

The 24-hour poison and drug information center

## Good Eats

Strengthen your heart with a healthy diet

# A LIFE WORTH LIVING

Heart attack survivor is back to grandpa duties, ready for international travel

 Banner Health

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# Healthy Heart, Healthy You



**W**e are pleased to bring you the first issue of *Health Smarts* for 2022!

We welcome our new readers and thank our current readers for your continued support. We

look forward to providing you with valuable health information in the coming months.

We are encouraged that we've been able to learn more about the pandemic and safety measures that involve keeping us all healthy — masking, social distancing, getting vaccinated, etc. Speaking of vaccines, we suggest that you stay current with yours as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), especially if you have a pre-existing medical condition.

We encourage you to take charge of your health, which is why *Health Smarts* focuses on you and your overall health. You'll find information about living a healthier lifestyle and practical tips to manage the issues we all face as we age. We invite you to explore our crossword puzzle that is not only fun, but can help keep your brain sharp!

For this edition, the emphasis is on your heart. We're going to introduce you to Bill, who needed a quadruple bypass a few years ago. He credits fitness for helping him stay healthy and encourages others to actively take part in their cardiac rehab programs. We've also included information about the latest fitness trackers and apps that help you monitor your heart at home.

Also, in this latest issue:

- Learn about the importance of sticking with your blood pressure medications and how you might be able to save money when it comes to those medications.
- When you eat healthy, you can improve your heart health. Learn which foods you should consume

and which you should avoid. We've also included a delicious recipe to tempt your taste buds.

- Find out why it's important to discuss your mental and emotional health during your Annual Wellness Visit. We've included an Annual Care Checklist in this issue for you to use as a reference for this important doctor's visit.
- We'll explore the services offered through the 24-hour Banner Poison & Drug Information Center hotline.
- You'll find some tips about completing Advance Directives to give your family peace of mind when they need it most.

We're proud that we can offer this publication to our Medicare beneficiaries whose doctor participates in the Medicare Shared Savings Program Accountable Care Organization through Banner Health Network. The Medicare Shared Savings Program does not require a sign up and does not change your Medicare benefits. This *Health Smarts* magazine is an added bonus, providing you with valuable information on the latest health care news, trends, and how to achieve your best personal health.

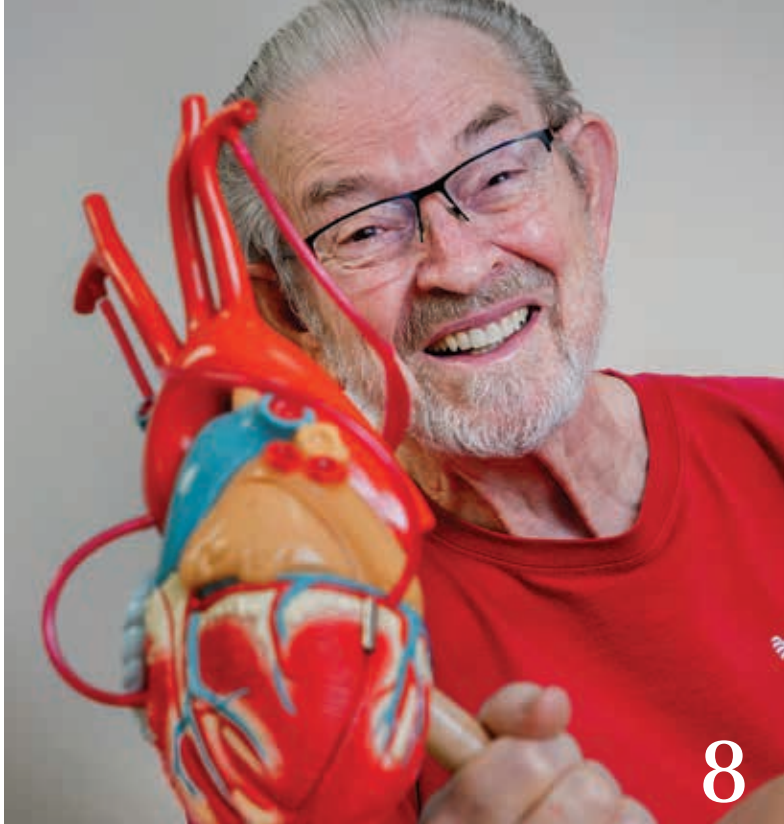
Of course, we are also here to provide you support so you can achieve your health goals! If you have any health-related questions, you have access to our 24-hour Banner Health Nurse On-Call hotline. Our nurses can answer questions about medications or make recommendations about where to get care. You can call us 602-747-7990 or toll free at 888-747-7990.

To your health,



Ed Clarke, MD  
Chief Medical Officer  
Banner Health Network Insurance Division





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# Protecting Your Mental Health

By Debra Gelbart

**Y**ou may not realize that an annual depression and anxiety screening is covered by Medicare.

Medicare mandates that the screening take place in a primary care physician's office during your Annual Wellness Visit.

"A screening that's done in emergency rooms, skilled nursing facilities or hospitals is not acceptable to meet the definition of an annual screening," explained Srinivas Dannaram, MD, a psychiatrist and Lead Physician for Banner Thunderbird Medical Center's Behavioral Health unit. "You don't need to show any signs and symptoms of depression to qualify for screening," Dr. Dannaram said.

Research suggests that depression may be easily overlooked by physicians caring for patients' medical needs. So a group charged with making wellness recommendations — U.S. Preventive Services Task Force — recommends conducting

Depression and anxiety screening are an important Medicare benefit

depression screenings for adults in a primary care setting where wellness is the focus.

## Screening can be critical

Most tools used to screen for depression also identify symptoms of anxiety, Dr. Dannaram said. Physicians may choose a screening tool most appropriate to one's age that can efficiently recognize risks for depression. The Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) may be suitable for older adults. This screening tool includes questions such as:

- Are you basically satisfied with your life?
- Have you dropped many of your

activities and interests?

- Do you feel that your life is empty?
- Do you often get bored?
- Are you in good spirits most of the time?

Major depressive disorder is defined as persistent sadness and joylessness accompanied by difficulty in daily activities for at least two weeks, Dr. Dannaram said. It affects mood, behavior, appearance and the individual's overall health. It is also characterized by prolonged feelings of emptiness, sadness and despair. Individuals with depression may also experience a change in appetite or



sleep pattern (insomnia or excessive sleep), difficulty concentrating on tasks, lack of energy, body aches and pain, digestive issues and sluggish or diminished body movements.

Depression is a leading cause of disability worldwide, Dannaram pointed out, with approximately 280 million individuals affected, so it's not limited to a small segment of the population. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, in 2019 an estimated 19.4 million adults in the U.S. had at least one major depressive episode, representing 7.8% of all U.S. adults. It's estimated that approximately two-thirds of individuals who suffer from major depressive disorder have

not been diagnosed.

If the Annual Wellness Visit mental health screening is positive for depression, your doctor will perform a thorough assessment and refer you for follow-up mental health care when appropriate. If the symptoms are not significantly impairing function and if there are no associated risks, then the primary care physician can manage the treatment with medications, Dr. Dannaram said.

### **Why are depression and anxiety often linked?**

Depression and anxiety are mentioned together because they co-exist almost 50% of the

time, Dr. Dannaram said. "Anxiety is an excessive worry about a situation that makes people eventually feel like a failure," he said. "Chronic anxiety and associated feelings could initiate depressive symptoms that continue to worsen with persisting anxiety in the background. Both depression and anxiety lead to automatic negative thoughts, which cognitively maintain symptoms and cause functional impairment in personal, social and occupational lives."

### **Treatment can be straightforward**

Major depression is treatable, Dr. Dannaram emphasized, but treatment is most effective when started early. Treatment usually consists of psychotherapy and medications.

Depression affects one in six older adults in the United States, Dr. Dannaram noted. Depressed older adults tend to have poorer health outcomes and utilize more health care resources than non-depressed older adults, he said. "A study on the outcome of screenings at Annual Wellness Visits revealed that depression is a major contributing factor to the higher rate of suicide among older adults compared with middle-aged adults."

Early recognition of major depression and therefore the ability to address it in a timely manner relies on effective screening, Dr. Dannaram said. "This is one of the reasons the Annual Wellness Visit is so important."



# Missing Medications

Don't skip your blood pressure pills

By Julie Maurer

**W**hile taking daily medications to regulate blood pressure may feel like a hassle, it's essential to always fill your prescriptions and not skip a dose.

"Unlike other medications that you may take on a temporary basis until your symptoms go away, high blood pressure medication should be taken as directed until your provider specifically tells you to discontinue," said Banner Pharmacy intern Wendy DeBano. "In order to keep high blood pressure under control, many need to take their medications for the rest of their lives."

She noted that even missing one or two doses can cause blood pressure to rise, and going off them completely could lead to an increased risk for heart attack and stroke.

"Some medications can result in a rebound effect if they are abruptly stopped. This means your blood pressure could quickly rise to dangerously high levels," DeBano said. "While most people will not feel this rise in blood pressure, it still has the potential to cause harm."

## Warning signs

Experiencing symptoms means you should get medical attention immediately. Warning signs include:

- Chest pain
- Severe headache
- Irregular heartbeat

If cost is a factor in the desire to stop taking medication, Banner Pharmacy intern Jaclyn Juarez recommends speaking to your doctor about other options.

"Have a conversation with them to figure out if there are cheaper or generic options available. Some lifestyle changes may potentially reduce the number of medications you take," Juarez said.



## Lowering costs

If prescribed with multiple medications, the physician may be able to recommend a different combination to reduce costs. If your insurance covers prescriptions, contact your health plan about how to lower costs.

"They can give you information about the cost of drugs covered by the plan and if changing pharmacies can help lower out-of-pocket costs. Then talk to your physician to find out if those options are a good fit for you and request help with making changes as needed," Juarez said.

She said that those with Part D coverage who are still struggling after this step should contact the Social Security Administration to apply for more assistance. Other options include online companies like Good Rx that gather medication prices and coupons to find the best ones for the consumer. Many pharmaceutical companies also offer Patient Assistance Programs, according to Juarez.

"I urge everyone who is concerned about affording medications to utilize these tips and have these conversations because there are many options available to ensure people are able to take their medications as prescribed," Juarez said.



# Tech to Help Your Ticker

Smartphone apps and wearable devices can help improve your heart health

By Elise Riley

While we all know being active is key to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, the reality is that “active” is one of those words that can be hard to define.

Your phone might just be the key to unlocking that dreaded question from your doctor: “How much activity are you getting?”

Whether it’s through simply monitoring steps or an app that measures cardiac performance,

smartphones and wearable gadgets make it possible to track and measure your health goals. When used responsibly, these tools might just help you stay healthy.

“There are hundreds of them,” said Lucy Williams, a clinical exercise physiologist at Banner Heart Hospital. “A lot of the trackers are gauged at a younger population, but we’ve had people where their Apple Watch picked up an arrhythmia. There are times when it’s captured things in correlation with a doctor.”

## So many options

Devices and apps range from the built-in health app on your phone (which can track the number of steps you take daily, for example) to wearable devices like the Apple Watch or Amazon Halo that can track and monitor your movement throughout the day to provide a variety of health and activity-

related feedback.

According to Williams, the key to getting the most out of these devices is having reasonable expectations for yourself and the device.

“They set goals like 10,000 steps,” said Williams. It’s not necessarily an ideal number for an aging population, but they can be a good tool; one tool as part of a healthy lifestyle.”

## Knowing your limits

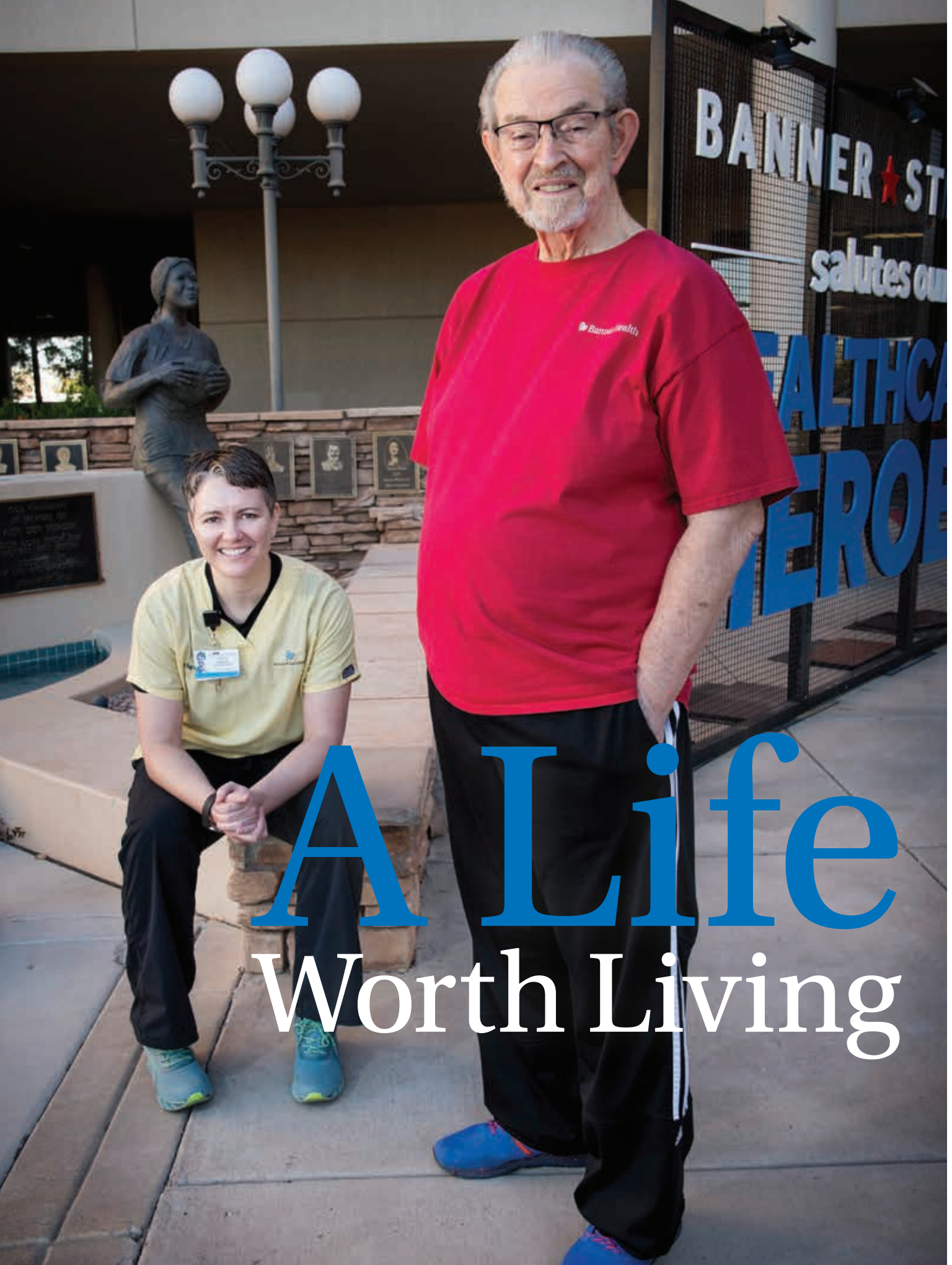
For someone who recently experienced a cardiac event, Williams said, 10,000 daily steps might be too steep a hill to climb. But knowing that you increased your daily activity from an average of 4,000 daily steps to 5,000 and then 6,000 shows important, gradual improvement — and that’s what matters.

“The reality is there’s not a lot more benefit after 7,500 steps,” she said. “If I can get somebody post-heart surgery at 6,500 steps, we’re pretty pleased — 7,500 is fantastic.”

Williams also cautioned to not let the app overtake your well-being. For example, apps or devices could encourage you to do a little extra — when that might not be the smart solution for you. Remember, the device isn’t your cardiologist or your nutritionist, it’s just a tool.

“These devices can be wonderful, but don’t let them stress you out either,” Williams said. “If you’re the type of person who gets stressed because it’s late and you still have 2,000 steps to go, that’s not good. It’s not helping you. This is about overall wellness.”





# A Life Worth Living



# Heart attack survivor is back to grandpa duties, ready for international travel

By Brian Sodoma | Photos by Rick D'Elia

**B**ill Bruce knew something was physically wrong, but thought he could remedy it with a little rest. He had just been treated successfully for prostate cancer in September 2018 and was excited to get back to the gym. His heart, however, had other plans.

"I was on the treadmill and I just felt so tired. I looked at my wife, Suzanne (Weaver), and said 'we need to go home,'" he recalled.

At home, chest pain radiated down his left arm. His wife called 9-1-1, and paramedics quickly realized Bruce was having a heart attack. Once stabilized, he was taken to Banner Heart Hospital in Mesa, Arizona where there would be more life-altering news for the happily retired grandfather.

## Not 'all clear' after all

In 2004, Bruce had a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA), a minor stroke. Since then, he had been monitoring his blood pressure and regularly checked in with his cardiologist. However, an angiogram at the hospital now showed all four major coronary

arteries were blocked.

"I just had all these tests and was given the 'all clear.' Thinking back on it, I felt a little winded at times, especially if I tried to run, but it didn't seem to be that big of problem," Bruce said.

The couple appreciated how responsive the Banner Heart Hospital team was after the angiogram.

"The surgeon was immediately in the hospital room and spent an hour going over the plan with us. Our daughter came in later and he did the same with her. We were quite surprised at how much time he spent with us," Weaver remembered.

Bruce underwent successful quadruple bypass surgery on Oct. 1 and spent two weeks in the hospital





where he worked through the first of a three-phase rehabilitation program. Banner teams prescribed simple exercises and plenty of walking and educated both he and his wife on diet and lifestyle choices. There were even classes to help Weaver learn more about her husband's condition and to manage stress herself as a caregiver. There was plenty to learn. Bruce spent years in stressful international sales jobs; he traveled a lot, ate on the go and wasn't physically active.

"I didn't do a good job of taking care of myself — I should've known better. My father died of a heart attack," he added.

### Cardiac rehab for the long haul

The second phase of Bruce's rehabilitation involved resuming life at home. He wore an EKG monitor in rehab settings and performed suggested exercises at home. He progressed quickly through the second phase and chose to continue with the optional third. Today, years later, he is still enrolled



in the program and works out under the guidance of exercise physiologists at the Banner Heart Hospital three times a week. Lucy Williams, an exercise physiologist, works with Bruce and says his mental strength is commendable.

"Bill has such a positive attitude. He's been through a lot of different things, medically, and he attends

rehab regularly, is always happy to participate, and looks forward to his workouts. His attitude has really helped him in his recovery," Williams said.

The exercise physiologist encourages all heart and pulmonary patients to take full advantage of rehabilitation opportunities after surgery.

"Cardiac rehab has been shown to reduce mortality, morbidity and rehospitalization," she noted. "It's really important to have that monitored environment where we can see if things are going OK. It helps people to get their confidence back, too, which is very important."

### Back to the fun stuff

The happy couple now enjoy more time with their grandchildren, and they look forward to resuming international travel again later this year. Bruce researches areas of the world and plans out detailed land tours along with cruise ship excursions. The journeys often take them on the road for a month or two.

He has booked a trip to visit Patagonia, Buenos Aires, Argentina and Santiago, Chile for December. But he knows that in order to get there, he'll need to avoid ambulance adventures first.

"I'm still in the healing process and I want to maintain it," he added. "When they do the maintenance checks on me, everything looks right; I'm 81, but I like to think I'm still hanging in there pretty good."

# Just a Phone Call Away

The 24-hour poison and drug information center is the first line of defense in life's 'uh-oh' situations

By Elise Riley

Here are a few reasons you might need to call the toxicology experts at the Banner Poison & Drug Information Center:

- A woman got distracted and couldn't remember if she already took a dose of medicine prescribed by her doctor.
- A man walked into the bathroom and found his grandchild on the floor with an open bottle of medication.
- Someone got up in the middle of the night to let their dog out, stepped on a scorpion and ended up being stung.

These scenarios are just a few examples of calls that Maureen Roland and her team typically receive at the Banner Poison & Drug Information Center. As Maricopa County's designated poison control center, her team helps people when they've been exposed to or have questions about potential toxins such as medications, stings or harmful chemicals. The free, 24-hour helpline can quickly respond to a question, whether that's getting someone to an emergency room or providing instructions for next steps

after their initial question.

"Most of our calls from home are after something has happened or if they think something might have happened," said Roland, the center's managing director. "We love those calls. We'd rather people call us if they think 'What if?' than to wait and see if something happens."

There are 55 poison centers in the United States accredited by the American Association of Poison Control Centers. Two of those are located in Arizona — the Maricopa County center just mentioned, and another, the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center located at the University of Arizona College of Pharmacy that serves the rest of the state.

A staff of registered nurses and a pharmacist fields more than 55,000 calls in a typical year. During COVID, when the center became a hotline for the Arizona Department of Health Services, calls jumped to more than 100,000 annually.

The team of Specialist for Poison Information (SPI) asks each caller questions to determine the severity of their situation. Examples of questions may include:

- How full is the prescription bottle?
- What other prescriptions are you taking?

It's part-detective work, part-clinical work. In cases that are critical emergencies, a physician is always on call and the team has admitting privileges to two local hospitals.

"Our hope and goal is to be able to help people at home and keep people out of the emergency room," Roland said. "We always provide follow-up calls to make sure the person at home is doing well. We do triage to make sure it's safe to be home, and then do follow-ups to make sure the effects have worn off." If someone is already in the emergency room or hospital, the poison center can provide guidance to the health care team to ensure the best patient care and outcome.

While it might be easy to connect the poison center with things like childhood accidents, Roland said it's important to remember the expertise the center can provide.

"We're not just for kids," she said. "People should think of us for chemicals — 'Something got in my eyes' — or if you accidentally took your medication twice. You don't have to wait. If you have a question about something — 'How do I throw this out? How do I safely get rid of these?' — call us anytime. Don't wait. Call and ask."



To reach the Banner Poison Drug and Information Center, call 602-253-3334 or 800-222-1222.





# Fueling Your Body's Engine

Strengthen your heart with a healthy diet

By Michelle Jacoby

**K**idneys, the liver and the stomach — your body's vital organs keep you running like a well-oiled machine. However, nothing may be more central to overall good health than the heart.

The heart is designed to pump oxygen and nutrient-rich blood throughout the body, keeping organs, muscles and cells energized. Just like a car engine needs to be well-maintained, the heart is the 'engine' of the human body, needing proper fuel and nutrients to operate at an optimum level.

This is where a good diet can be most beneficial.

"Poor diets can starve the body of necessary nutrients needed for survival, and allow unhealthy levels of nutrients, bacteria and chemicals to enter the body," said Felicia Lane, a registered dietitian with Banner Health. "This can result in damage to the heart and the blood vessels responsible for delivering oxygen and nutrients throughout the body. Damage left untreated can lead to low energy levels, poor lung function, heart attacks, kidney failure, pancreas failure and other system failures."

## Eating right

So, what does a heart-healthy diet look like?

According to Lane, you should focus on eating less processed foods, limit your sugar and sodium and eat whole, natural foods as often as possible.

"The best foods to eat are whole grains; fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables in dark and bright colors; healthy fats like extra virgin olive oil, canola oil, grapeseed oil, nut butters and avocados; and low-fat, low-sugar dairy," explained Lane. Plant-based proteins (legumes, nuts, beans, lentils, soy), fish high in omega-3 (salmon, herring, halibut) and lean proteins (chicken, turkey, egg whites, tuna, shellfish) are good for the heart, too.

"Conversely, processed, packaged and canned foods that contain high levels of saturated fats, sodium, added sugars, smoked or cured meats, and lean red meat shouldn't be eaten more than one to times a month," she continued. She also recommends limiting sugar intake from zero to four grams per serving. Sodium intake should be from 2,000 to 3,000 milligrams per day.

### Changing your lifestyle

In addition to changing your diet, lifestyle changes can help with improved heart health. This includes getting enough sleep (seven to eight hours a day), managing stress, staying hydrated, avoiding tobacco and maintaining a healthy weight.

"If you're in overall good health and not overweight, you should exercise 30 minutes a day, three to four times per week to maintain your weight, along with good oxygen and blood flow," Lane said. "If you're overweight and/or have certain health risks like heart disease, lung disease, kidney failure or diabetes, consult your doctor for their guidance."

Lane also suggests making routine doctor appointments with your primary care physician and cardiologist. "It's important to be seen by your doctor even when you're feeling well," she said. "They may catch symptoms early and you can take advantage of preventive tools that can extend your quality of life."



## Chicken and Veggie Kebabs

1½ lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed and cut into 1½-inch pieces  
 1 lemon  
 2 scallions, finely chopped  
 ¼ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley  
 3 tbsp. olive oil, divided  
 Kosher salt and pepper

Veggie combos  
 12 cherry or grape tomatoes and 1 small zucchini, cut into thick half-moons  
 1 red bell pepper and fresh pineapple (8 oz.), both cut into 1-inch chunks  
 1 sweet potato, cut into 1-1/2-in. chunks and 1 medium red onion, cut into 8 wedges, each halved crosswise

Heat grill to medium-high.

Place chicken in large bowl. Finely grate zest of lemon over chicken. Add scallions, parsley, 2 tablespoons oil, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper; toss to combine. Squeeze lemon juice over top and toss again.

Choose a veggie combo and, in second bowl, toss vegetables with remaining tablespoon oil and 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Thread chicken and veggies onto skewers. Grill, turning occasionally, until chicken is just cooked through, 8 to 10 minutes.

Source: [womansday.com/food-recipes/a32884878/chicken-kebabs-recipe/](http://womansday.com/food-recipes/a32884878/chicken-kebabs-recipe/)



# Decision Time



## What you should know about advance directives for health care **By Brian Sodoma**

**W**e all want to enjoy our Golden Years, whether it's taking an exciting vacation, visiting with family and the grandkids or checking off bucket list items. So, it's natural to want to put off creating documents about your end-of-life care. However, not doing this could create uncertainty for friends and loved ones. Dr. Sarah Payne is division medical director for Banner Health Hospice and Palliative Care. She clarifies some misunderstandings about advance directives, offering tips to help you complete this important task.

"People think of it as that 12-page document put together by their lawyer that says, 'if I'm in a persistent vegetative state, I do not want this or that.' Most patients usually don't end up in a persistent vegetative state. In most cases, it's questions around dialysis, feeding tubes, time on a ventilator and things like that," Dr. Payne explained.

### Defining them

Many people confuse a will with advance care directives. These are two completely different documents. A will is a financial instrument used for assets, whereas an

advance directive explains what medical decisions should be made if you are not able make them yourself. Advance directives are sometimes included in a will, but it's better to have them written separately and scanned into your electronic medical records for health care team access.

Advance directive forms can be found online, at your doctor's, or a lawyer's office. The State of Arizona Attorney General also has a template inside its *Life Care Planning* packet. Your directives can be as specific as you'd like and don't require an attorney.

### Resources to help, medical power of attorney

To help you figure out what to include, Dr. Payne recommends visiting [FiveWishes.org](https://www.fivewishes.org) or [TheConversationProject.org](https://www.theconversationproject.org). Both programs exist to help you clearly articulate your desires. "These organizations do a great job of lightening the mood and opening up the dialogue around this subject," she added.

One of the most important decisions to make is to appoint a medical power of attorney, Dr. Payne emphasizes. Then, make sure the person you choose is aware of your desires.

"If I do not have a medical power of attorney and I go to the hospital and am not able to make decisions for myself, it's going to default to who the Arizona Surrogacy Law says is my decision-maker," she says, "and that may not be someone you want making those decisions."

### Get started, make updates

If you don't have advance directives, don't delay. Annual wellness exams or a change in health status can serve as reminders to complete them. If you already have directives, don't forget to update them periodically.

"Nobody wants to think of these scenarios. You can say, 'it's never going to happen to me,' but you don't want to do that," Dr. Payne noted. "With COVID, we have seen too many unfortunate situations where people didn't have them. Even just getting the Five Wishes booklet, looking through it and thinking about it, is a huge step."



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## Healthy Living **CALENDAR**

### REAL TALK

Real talk is designed and presented as an interactive series of shared experiences and expert presentations about the challenges and impact of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias that affect so many in the Black and Brown communities. This workshop was built by racially and culturally integrated teams that bring research, education, experience and hope to the conversation. This provides attendees an experience and reassurance that you're not alone. You can survive what you're facing.

Topics vary per session to allow for a focused, candid conversation where you leave feeling informed, educated and inspired.

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to noon on  
Saturdays, March  
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- ♥ **Make the most of your Banner Health benefits**
- ♥ **Feel better** each day with companionship and humor

Search "Pyx Health" in the Apple or Google Play stores, or call us at 1-855-499-4777.

**Pyx Health**<sup>®</sup>



## For life's potential emergencies

Have you ever wondered, is this an emergency? If you aren't sure, or you need a nurse's advice about where to get care, call us. We are here to help. **24 hours a day.**

**Banner Health Nurse On-Call: (602) 747-7990 or (888) 747-7990**

 **Banner Health Network**