

# Staying Heart Healthy in Plano

By Britney Porter

**I**t's out with the old and in with the new, that is, new imaging technology. Perhaps the latest technology revolutionizing medicine is the 64-slice cardiac CT scanner that allows cardiologists to view high resolution images of the heart and coronary tree within seconds.

With the first multi-slice CT scanners, such as the 4-slice scanner introduced in the '90s, patients had to hold their breath for a long time to be scanned. The upgraded 16-slice scanner allowed more patients to hold their breath as data was collected within 20 - 25 seconds. Now, the 64-slice scanner produces scans at 5 - 13 seconds, and patients with even severe pulmonary disease can hold their breath for the required length of time.

**Dr. Leena Sharan, MD**, a cardiologist at **Presbyterian Hospital of Plano** added, "The 64-slice coronary CT scanner is helpful in evaluating coronary artery disease without any significant invasive procedure. It does not require any sedation or post-procedure care."

Plus, the 64-slice scanner captures images as thin as a credit card with a much higher resolution. This gives doctors a more accurate picture of the patient's heart and allows them to measure for calcification, an added variable in disease management.

Studies have shown that women who may be considered at low risk for heart disease still face the potential of calcium buildup in their arteries. "Calcium build-up in women puts them at higher risk as women have smaller coronary arteries," said Sharan. "Women with high levels of calcium are four times as likely to need heart bypass surgery or angioplasty."

The standard method of measuring risk for heart disease is the Framingham risk score. It includes factors such as age, cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, and obesity – but not calcium.

Coronary artery Calcification Scoring is obtained by a 5-minute CT scan of the chest. **Dr. Waenard Miller, MD, FACC**, at **Legacy Heart Center** said, "The current recommendation for Coronary Calcium Screening for women is age 55 and older, but many believe that since women are having cardiac events at earlier ages, then it makes sense to screen earlier, especially in women with significant cardiac risk factors." Miller referred to hypertension, high cholesterol, obesity, smoking history, and family history of cardiovascular disease as risk factors.

"Early detection of cardiac risk with subsequent appropriate treatment can prevent most cardiovascular events, like strokes and heart attacks," said Miller.

You must know the symptoms of heart disease to prevent it. **Dr. Patricia Gum, MD**, at **HeartPlace** said, "Many people will present atypical symptoms such as nausea, shortness of breath, fatigue, or a change in exercise tolerance. These types of symptoms are more common in women, but all patients need to be aware of their bodies and be proactive in seeking medical intervention."

As the director of the Chest Pain Unit at Medical Center of Plano, Gum has been working with the acute Myocardial Infarction (MI) team to bring down the treatment times for heart attack, or MI, interruption of blood flow to the heart. "We now have the best times in the nation for acute MI treatment and continue to strive for improvement," she said.

How often should you test for heart disease? Gum said, "The need for testing is best determined by your doctor who can factor in your overall risk and symptom load."

Young adults are learning that even if they're at low risk for heart disease, they should choose healthy lifestyles. "You may be 35 years old, but your arteries may be 45," said **Dr. Bruce Bowers, MD**, at **The Heart Hospital Baylor Plano**. "What you are on the outside of your body may not be truly reflective of what you are on the inside."

Bowers is the co-director of vascular clinical research and said that a new noninvasive test can pick up on subtle changes that may be silent until they present a heart attack or a stroke. The Carotid Intima-Media Thickness (CIMT) test uses ultrasound to measure the thickness of the first two layers of the carotid artery in a person's neck.

Software used by the CIMT originally was developed by NASA to process pictures from space missions, including the Voyagers and Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, but the technology is currently being used to detect thickening of the arteries, evidence of atherosclerosis.



The 64-slice CT scanner produces high resolution images giving doctors a more accurate picture of the heart.

"The test really ends up being a crystal ball for us," said Bowers. "Atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) often remains silent for many years. Using this test, people understand that lifestyle changes *now* will make a difference in their life as they age."

**n Williams, MD**, is the director of the Vascular & Lipid Clinic at **Medical Center of Plano**, and that's because of lifestyle habits, disease may occur in individuals with no known family history. But "if we raise our families with heart-healthy lifestyles and have a lifelong awareness of the risk factors for heart disease that are controllable, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and smoking," she said, "we can prevent heart disease."

According to Williams, individuals should be concerned if heart disease is present in *female* family members before the age of 65 or in *male* family members before the age of 55. But again, she emphasized that everyone should be proactive and take preventive measures.

### National Women's Healthy Heart Fair

Catch up on the latest medical developments and enjoy healthy cooking and fun fitness demonstrations at the Fourth Annual National Women's Healthy Heart Fair Saturday, February 9. Take advantage of free health screenings for blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol with counseling provided by medical professionals. U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison will serve as Honorary Chair. Presented by the Sister to Sister Foundation, this free event is from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. at the Dallas Convention Center, Exhibit D (on level 2). Call 214-871-3029 or visit [www.sistertosister.org](http://www.sistertosister.org) for more information. *Heart screenings at this event are for women ages 21 and up.*

### Heart Smart Saturday

Saturday, February 23  
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
The Shops at Willow Bend,  
Grand Court (Food Court entrance)

HEARTLINK<sup>®</sup> presents Heart Smart Saturday, a free event with the latest information on heart health and screenings for:

- Heart rhythm
- Stroke risk
- Blood pressure
- Body-fat
- 12-lead EKGs
- Glucose
- Posture & balance
- Cholesterol
- Grip strength

### Day of Dance

Don those dancin' shoes and get ready to shake, rattle and roll! From tap, jazz and ballet to the twist, macarena, and hokey pokey, dance to a healthier you. As part of Heart Smart Saturday at Medical Center of Plano, Day of Dance is a national event in more than 60 cities to promote exercise and a healthy lifestyle. See ad on page 56 for details.

Medical Center of Plano's latest developments in cardiac care include a new electrophysiology lab and improved catheterization lab with technologies to assist its patients. "Modern medications have made it much easier to control even the most stubborn blood pressure and cholesterol," said Williams. "If there is one message for the public that is most important to share, it is that heart disease is preventable."

For information on Heart Smart February events like *A Tasting for Good Health* and *National Wear Red Day*, see ad on page 57.