

# February designated as National Heart Month

*The AHA recommends cholesterol testing for all people 20 and older*

By G. Jaros  
Oregon Daily Emerald

When Takeshi Sengiku lights up a cigarette, he's not thinking about his irregular heartbeat or his future — he's just trying to relax so that he can get back to his studies.

"I consider my mental health much more than my physical health," Sengiku said. "If I don't have a cigarette for a half day I feel so frustrated — like I'm going crazy. I can't concentrate to study or do anything."

Cigarette smoking, popular with college-aged people, is one of the strongest links with cardiovascular disease, according to the American Heart Association.

Coinciding with Valentine's Day, the National Heart Association has designated February as National Heart Month.

The association recommends that people 20 years and older check their cholesterol levels on a

regular basis. Students are often "shocked" by the results of their cholesterol tests, said Annie Dochnahl, peer health education coordinator.

"We see a lot of high cholesterol with the free screening," she said. "Students who think themselves pretty fit and trim and responsible with their diet — I would guess a third of the students who get checked are shocked to learn that they have high cholesterol, which is a contributor to heart disease."

Sengiku had to start thinking about his heart at a young age when a routine physical revealed that he had an irregular heartbeat.

"The doctor asked me if I had any problems when I played soccer," Sengiku said. "I told them no, but with the look on the doctor's face I decided to start thinking about my physical decisions. It's scary when you don't feel anything is wrong, but you're told there is a problem."

Sengiku isn't sure that now is the time to try to quit smoking.

"Maybe I'll see when I graduate

and I'm away from studying. I think there is a certain age when people worry about physical trouble — but I'm not worried about that now," Sengiku said. "I guess maybe I'm a little scared that when I do look into it, it will be too late. But that is the dilemma, isn't it?"

This sort of dilemma can be avoided if action is taken sooner rather than later, Dochnahl said.

"Given that you live in the same body your whole life and that heart disease tends to be a cumulative phenomenon, it makes a lot of sense to be proactive with taking care of your heart," she said. "Whatever one does early on is going to reap greater benefits later on. You could party it up now, and at age 40, you'd be doing a lot of back-peddling to try to rectify the problems that you've created not caring for your heart when you're young."

Cholesterol is one of the factors that increases the risk of heart trouble. Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like substance found in all cells. It is important in forming cell mem-

branes, some hormones and other tissue. Problems stem from too much cholesterol. Foods from animals, such as meat, poultry, fish, seafood and dairy products are the main culprits. Egg yolks in particular are loaded with cholesterol.

Besides cholesterol, other risk factors include: age, a family history of heart trouble, smoking, high blood pressure, physical inactivity, obesity, stress and diabetes.

Keys to keeping a healthy heart include: maintaining a normal body cholesterol level, developing good diet and exercise habits, not smoking, reducing stress and controlling blood pressure by losing excess weight, drinking less alcohol, lowering sodium intake and taking time for aerobic activity.

The Student Health Center offers free cholesterol screening every Tuesday between 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. in the Peer Health Office located on the main floor. Blood pressure testing also is a free service available to students.

## Interesting heart facts

- In the course of life, the heart will have pumped enough blood to fill 13 super tankers, each with a capacity of one million barrels. This figure represents an average volume pumped by a heart at rest.
- At any given time, 75 percent of blood in the human body is blue colored, not red. This is exhausted blood returning to the heart to be remixed with oxygen, which turns the blood red.
- The heart is roughly the size of two clenched fists.
- It actually sits in the center of the chest between the lungs, not to the left.
- It beats more than 100,000 times a day.
- A normal adult's heart, at rest, pumps about five quarts of blood each minute, roughly 2,100 gallons per day.
- If the full quantity of blood that courses through the circulatory system were weighed, it would be about 8 percent of total body weight.

# Healthy Start helps parents develop healthy families

*The program's focus is maintaining the mental health of children*

By Michael Hines  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Head bowed and clad in a bullet-proof vest, Kip Kinkel has twice been led into the Lane County courts. Ironically, in the same building — just a hop, a skip and a metal detector away — lives a young county program designed to curtail antisocial behavior in children.

Healthy Start, a 4-year-old statewide program, assists first-time parents in developing strong families and healthy children. It's a home-visitation program that gives families the tools to

deal with the daily stresses that invariably crop up.

Following a year of tragic school shootings around the country, programs like Healthy Start are becoming more popular. Pam Strimling, Lane County Healthy Start program manager, said home visitation is powerful, but it is not the cure-all.

"Weird things are going to happen," Strimling said. "There's always going to be an incidence of unexpected, unexplainable outcomes."

But those are the rare cases that just cannot be prevented, she said. Programs have used home visitation for a number of years, and studies have shown a decrease in abuse, Strimling said.

The studies have also shown a decrease in antisocial behavior in teens.

"It's actually the community coming together," said Fritz Jenkins, Healthy Start state coordinator.

The program, which operates in 14 Oregon counties, can be molded to best fit the individual communities.

Healthy Start introduces newborn babies into the community with the goal of having them ready to learn when they begin school.

"It's sort of like the welcome wagon, only for kids," Strimling said.

Hospitals, maternity doctors and midwives throughout the community screen families of newborn children for risk factors. This could include marital status, unstable housing or a history of abuse, among other things.

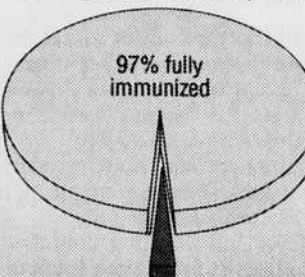
Healthy Start identifies those families that need long-term care. In 1998, 307 families in Lane County were offered and accepted long-term visiting from a pool of 1,540 screens. Healthy Start then contacts local programs, such as Birth to Three and Parent Partnership, to reach out to the families.

Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey recently talked about the value of programs like Healthy Start. In light of the shootings at Thurston High School that left two students dead, he said he has begun to see more value in prevention programs than high school turnaround programs.

## Immunizations for 2-year-olds

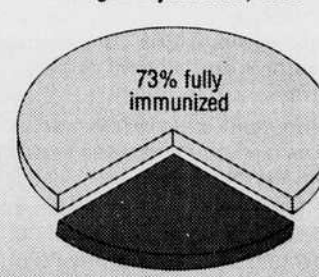
Percent of Oregon 2-year-olds fully immunized in 1997 compared to Healthy Start 2-year-olds fully immunized in 1998.

Healthy Start 2-year-olds from higher risk families, 1998



SOURCE: OSU Family Policy Program

Oregon 2-year-olds, 1997



Matt Garton/Emerald

"I have definitely come to the conclusion now that any good prevention program has to start at the earliest ages and work its way up," he said.

"There are wonderful parents out there," Strimling said. "There are many more wonderful parents than there are parents in trouble."

Since Healthy Start was implemented in 1995, it is hard to see any long-term results from the program, Jenkins said. But there are indicators that show promise for the program, he said.

Oregon State University's Family Policy Program recently released a study on Healthy Start. For families that are screened or served by Healthy Start, the incidence of maltreatment in infants is 12 in every 1,000, the report said. The incidence of abuse in those families

that are not served is 17 in every 1,000 children.

"I think Oregon believes it's a real valuable program for early childhood and development. I think we're very successful today," Jenkins said. "But there is always room to improve."

Healthy Start is currently attempting to expand to all of the Oregon counties. The Oregon Legislature will decide its fate later this session.

For now, Strimling said she is happy with the progress in Lane County.

"It feels real good," she said. "I think we're making a change in the community."

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