

# HEALTH

## HEALTH WATCH

**Chronic Pain Support Group** -- Meets the first Wednesday at 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

**Cardiac-Rehab Exercises** -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For information, call 503-251-6260.

**Stroke Alert Screening** -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

**Managing Chronic Hepatitis C** -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m. The informative session is led by a registered nurse to help you manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctor referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

**Better Breathers** -- An asthma educational support group meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month from 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. at Adventist Medical Center. For information, call 503-251-6830.

**Powerful Tools For Caregivers** -- 6-week educational series designed to help family caregivers take care of themselves while caring for relatives or friends with chronic illness. Class size is limited, and registration is required. Call 503-413-8018.

**Leg Alert Screening** -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

**Smoke-Free Support Group** -- Meets Mondays, 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. For information, call 503-256-4000.

**Osteoporosis Screening** -- An ultrasound bone density screening with personalized education; fee \$30. To schedule an appointment, call 503-261-6611.

**Family Caregiver Support Group** -- This topic-oriented group offers a safe place to discuss the stresses, challenges and rewards of providing care to an older relative or friend. Meets the first Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital.

**Free Body Basics** -- This physician recommended class is appropriate for all ages and health conditions. Plan to attend this one-session class and learn the simple guidelines for safe exercises, including stretching. Call 503-256-4000 to register.

**Empowerment through Relaxation** -- Free informal meditation classes that address breathing techniques, some gentle ancient African yoga poses and mental balancing techniques. People have left these classes joyful and with a peaceful view of their lives. Call Dr. Marcelitte Failla at 503-228-6140.

**Cancer Resource Center** -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## Take Stock of Cardiac Health

February is American Heart Month, and health experts at Providence are reminding people to take stock of their cardiac health.

A new study confirms controlling high blood pressure at any time reduces the risk of heart disease, but not letting it creep up in the first place is even better.

The study showed that men in their 40s who reduced their high blood pressure significantly lowered their risk of cardiovascular disease in their 50s.

Men who did little or nothing to control their high blood pressure in their 40s ended up with hypertension.

High blood pressure is associated with thickening of the arteries, which makes the heart work harder, leading to range of ailments and even death.

While some prescription medicines can help with high blood pressure, many experts recommend lifestyle changes including a healthy diet, exercise and no tobacco use.

## Shortness of Breath is No Holiday

### For Your Health



BY LARRY  
LUCAS

In February, our thoughts often turn to Valentine's Day, an occasion to celebrate and nurture relationships with loved ones. When you're with that special someone, even the simplest romantic gesture, a box of chocolates or a heartfelt card, may take your breath away.

But when it's not the result of love sickness, shortness of breath is no holiday. In fact, it can be devastating.

COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, is an obstruction of the lungs that makes it difficult to breathe. It's the third leading cause of death in the United States.

Also known by names such as chronic bronchitis or emphysema, COPD develops slowly and worsens over time. In severe cases, the disease can eventually limit patients from doing even the most basic activities that most of us take for granted, such as walking, cooking or taking care of themselves.

Currently there are more than 12 million people diagnosed with COPD, and its estimated that another 12 million are living with the

disease, but unaware.

While COPD doesn't disproportionately affect the African American community, studies have shown that African Americans with COPD use fewer health services than their white counterparts, which may lead to racial disparities in health outcomes.

It's important to see your doctor if you exhibit any of the symptoms of COPD, such as chronic coughing or shortness of breath, and to follow their prescribed health regimen for controlling the disease.

There is no cure for COPD, but there are changes you can make to help prevent the disease, manage its effects or slow its progression.

If you're a smoker, it's no surprise that the most important thing to do is quit smoking immediately. Not only is kicking the cigarette habit a good choice for your health, but your significant other will likely thank you for it too.

For patients diagnosed with COPD, it's important to build and

maintain muscle strength in the arms and legs. Pursuing regular exercise such as walking or biking with your companion can help you stay active and carry out every-day tasks.

In addition to lifestyle changes, you and your doctor should sit down to discuss which therapies may best control your COPD symptoms.

Prescription medicines can help treat complications of the disease and improve your overall health. Fortunately, a recent survey reveals that there are 54 medicines in development for COPD by America's biopharmaceutical research and manufacturing companies.

Of course, this innovation is for naught if patients can't access the medicines they need. Luckily, the Partnership for Prescription Assistance (1-888-4PPA-NOW; pparx.org) helps connect patients in need to patient assistance programs that offer more than 2,500 medicines for free or nearly free and provides information on more than 10,000 free health care clinics in America. It takes less than 15 minutes to find out if you may qualify.

This February, take care that you're not left breathless. Unless, that is, it's because of a valentine.

Larry Lucas is a retired vice president for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

## Donors Get Tickets to Body Worlds


Blood donors at the Portland, Salem, and Vancouver Red Cross donor centers will receive a free ticket to the Body Worlds and the Brain exhibit at OMSI if their donations are made on Friday and Saturday during the month of February.

Appointments for blood and platelet donors are preferred by calling 1-800-RED CROSS or visiting [redcrossblood.org/pnw](http://redcrossblood.org/pnw) and entering the sponsor code: [bodyworldsOMSI](http://bodyworldsOMSI).

The Body Worlds and the Brain exhibit includes more than 200 authentic human specimens, including entire bodies, individual organs, and transparent body slices, reserved through von Hagens' Plastination process.

This all-new presentation highlights neuroscience, brain development, and performance and invites profound reflection on the power, beauty, and fragility of the amazing human body and brain.

Take the  
TEST  
Take  
CONTROL



Every Tuesday  
5:30 - 7:15 pm

Just walk in  
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5329 NE MLK Jr. Blvd.  
2nd Floor

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