

Summer is a great time for having fun outside, but it's also a time when more injuries occur. St. Joseph Mercy Oakland's Emergency Center, Urgent Care Center, and Pediatric After Hours Center are always ready to give you the care you need, whether you or a family member have a serious injury or a minor medical problem. Call the Emergency Center at **248.858.3100**, Urgent Care at **248.858.3120** or the Pediatric After Hours Center at **248.858.3493**.

Joint Care Center

Are you considering a joint replacement in the near future? St. Joseph Mercy Oakland has a premier Joint Care Center that has been featured on television and in other media. Learn about the *Seven Steps to Successful Joint Replacement* by calling **248.858.3227**.

From Our Heart, For Your Heart

St. Joe's would like to send you a special gift, "Recipes from the Heart." This healthy cookbook, with recipes from local chefs, is sure to warm your heart and invigorate your palate. For your free cookbook, call our Health Line at **1.800.372.6094**.



Summer 2001



HEALTH TIPS

New Disease Management Program Helps Man Cope with Congestive Heart Failure

St. Joseph Mercy Oakland began a Heart Failure Management Program in April 1999 with a team of healthcare professionals – the patient's physician, nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, social workers, and other therapists. The purpose is to help patients learn to take charge of their health. This, in turn, will increase their quality of life, decrease hospital stays, decrease returns to the hospital and save on other medical costs.

In April 2000, St. Joe's and the Mercy Oakland Physician Network (MOPN) received funding from Health Alliance Plan (HAP) to design, implement and evaluate a Chronic Disease Management Center (CDMC). The CDMC is a comprehensive approach to managing chronic disease, and the Heart Failure Management Program is one of the first to be implemented.

A diagnosis of congestive heart failure can be frightening. While serious, such a diagnosis doesn't have to spell doom. Heart failure means your heart doesn't pump as well as it used to. When there is not enough blood pumping, you may feel tired. Heart failure can be caused by an earlier heart attack or by high blood pressure or heart valve disease. Sometimes, the reason is unknown.

Clarkston resident Mike O'Brien, 76, was surprised when he was diagnosed with heart failure last summer. "I just had a physical and nothing showed up," said Mike. "About a week later, I woke up at 4 a.m. and was having trouble breathing. I called 911 and they took me to St. Joe's where I was admitted to the Coronary Intensive Care Unit. The doctors found that I had an irregular heartbeat that had weakened my heart."

At this point, Barbara Samson, RN, a case manager for the Heart Failure Management Program, thought Mike would be a good candidate. She began checking him regularly at home. Mike called Barb one day complaining of not feeling well. Barb went to see him and found his pulse was dangerously low. She arranged for him to see his cardiologist right away. Mike was then admitted to the hospital and had a pacemaker placed. On another occasion, Mike noticed weight gain. Barb worked with his physician to adjust medications and alleviate the problem. By acting early, a hospitalization was avoided.

Mike received follow-up telephone calls from a nurse who reinforced the importance of nutrition. Mike had a stationary bike, but wasn't using it. Once he was counseled on the importance of exercise, Mike began using the bike regularly, and added



Clarkston resident Mike O'Brien looks forward to getting back in the game.

walking to his daily exercise. "I lost 37 pounds in the last year and a half, and feel better," he said.

Mike will always live with chronic heart disease, but with the support, education and home monitoring he receives from professionals in the Chronic Disease Management Center, he is healthier and able to enjoy life. "I see my son and daughter quite a bit, as well as my three grandchildren," said Mike. "I was a golfer, and now that I'm feeling better, I can see myself out there again."

Mike hasn't been hospitalized since joining the program and his physician has decreased the medications. Mike knows he can get in touch with the team members at any time, but now he has the tools to take good care of himself.

For more information about St. Joe's Heart Management Program, call **Karen Rutkowski, 248.858.6710**.

Get Your Travel Tips

Are you taking a trip overseas? Be sure to safeguard your health. St. Joe's has a Travel Medicine Program that can help. Marianne Swanson, RN, provides important information.

What kind of medical care do I need if I'm planning a trip overseas?

It depends on the country you visit. Brazil, Mexico and China have sanitation issues and insect-borne diseases. Typhoid, yellow fever, malaria, and polio are prevalent in some areas and travelers need to be immunized. Many of us were immunized as children with oral polio vaccine, but if you are going to a country where polio is prevalent, you should get a polio booster.

What about Traveler's Diarrhea?

This is caused by microorganisms in the food and water supply. In many countries, it's safe only to drink bottled water. Fortunately, there is medication that can treat traveler's diarrhea.

What if I become ill overseas and need to return to the U.S. immediately?

If you have to be airlifted out of the country, the cost can be \$10,000 to \$40,000. Most health care insurances here don't cover that. You can purchase international health insurance packages for you and your family in case of serious illness.

Does St. Joe's provide immunizations and counseling for groups going overseas?

When Chrysler sent a group of executives overseas, we went on site to prepare them. We do the same for others, such as missionary groups.

How do you track information on countries?

Our computer program is updated weekly, so we have a wide range of information about any country you plan to visit.

How much time in advance do I need to get immunized?

Three or four weeks before you leave. Some immunizations need to be given in a series, and if you have a reaction to any of the medications you don't want to be dealing with that on your trip.

Will health insurance cover immunizations?

Some do and others don't. Check with your insurance representative.

For more detailed information about the Travel Medicine Program, please call **248.276.8854**.

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