

# Healthwise

The Official Newsmagazine of MFHN

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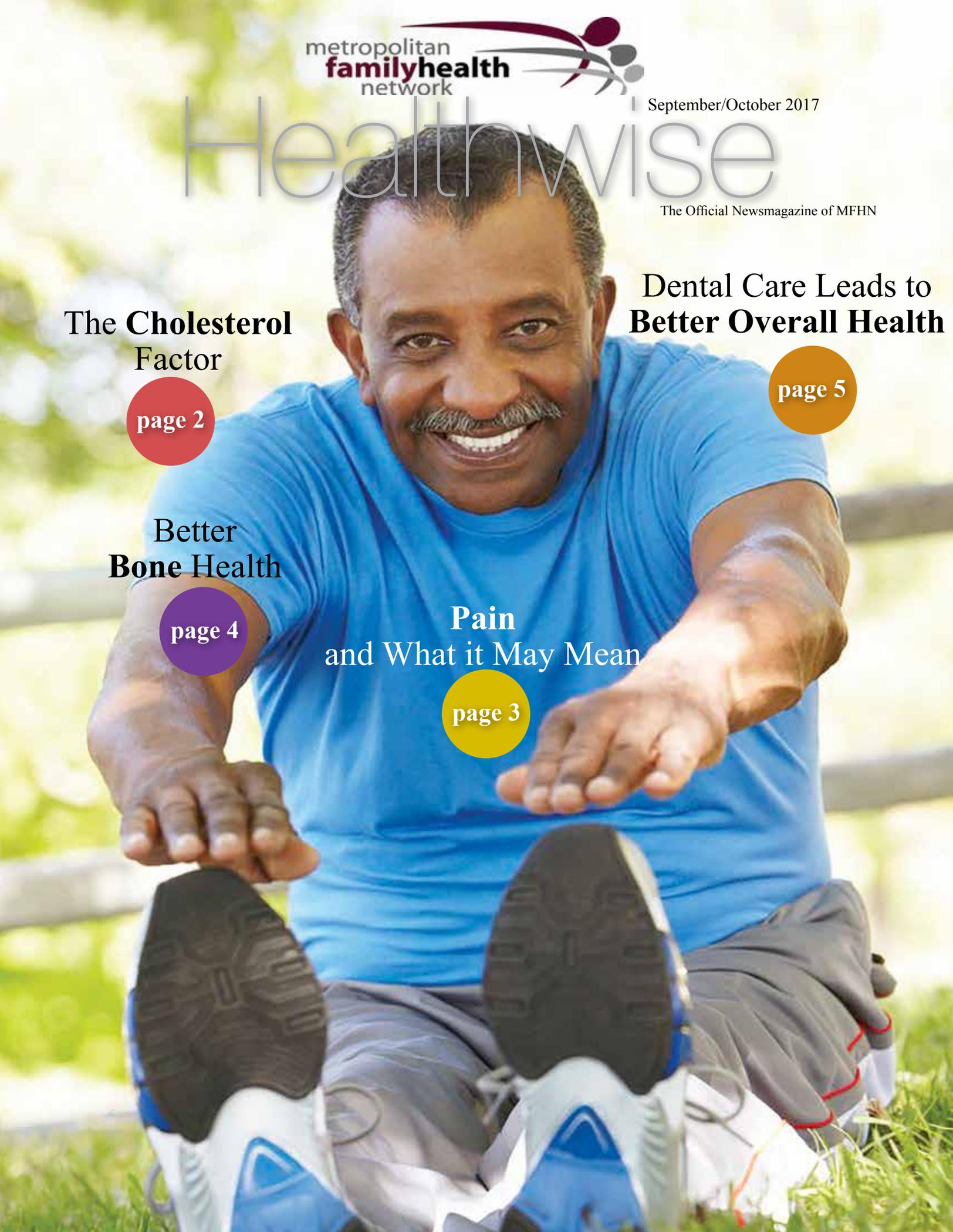
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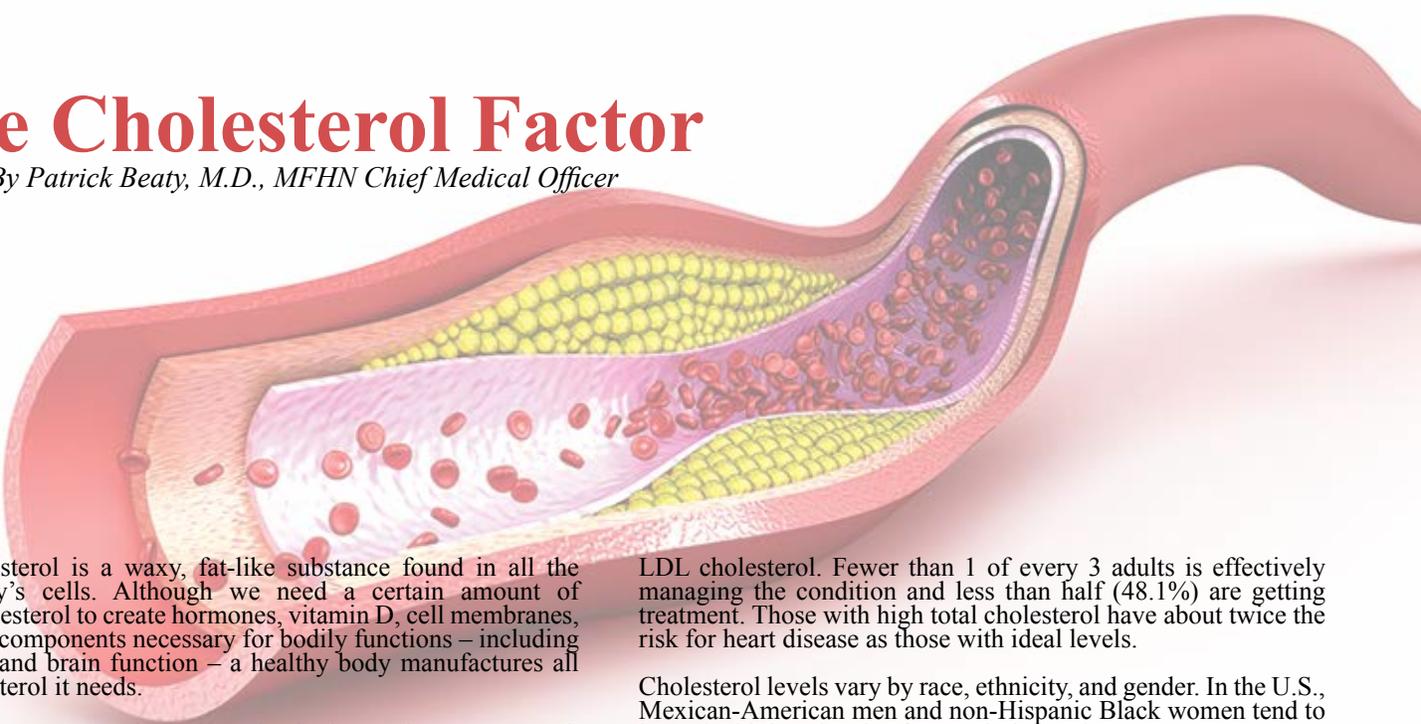
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# The Cholesterol Factor

By Patrick Beaty, M.D., MFHN Chief Medical Officer



**C**holesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in all the body's cells. Although we need a certain amount of cholesterol to create hormones, vitamin D, cell membranes, and other components necessary for bodily functions – including digestion and brain function – a healthy body manufactures all the cholesterol it needs.

Health issues may arise when the body produces too much cholesterol. High amounts are found in butter, cheese, milk, yogurt, meat, and shellfish. For decades, the American Heart Association linked high-cholesterol diets with high rates of high cholesterol-related disease. Recent research points to genetic makeup as the primary cause of cholesterol elevated above healthy levels.

Cholesterol travels through the bloodstream in small packages called lipoproteins. Made of fat (lipid) and proteins, there are two types: low-density lipoproteins (LDL) and high-density lipoproteins (HDL). Having ideal levels of both is important.

LDL cholesterol, often referred to as “bad” cholesterol, can lead to a buildup in the arteries and health issues. Since arteries transport blood from the heart to the rest of the body (and to the heart muscle itself), it's vital that arteries remain clear. HDL or “good” cholesterol transports excess cholesterol from other parts of the body to the liver, where it's recycled.

High blood cholesterol, which occurs when people have too much cholesterol, usually doesn't have any symptoms until a stroke or heart attack occurs. In many cases, people aren't even aware their cholesterol levels are high.

It's important to know your levels and what your best numbers are. Your doctor will probably discuss “total blood cholesterol” – a measure of both LDL and HDL, as well as VLDL (very low-density lipoprotein), which is the triglyceride-carrying component of lipids. The higher your LDL cholesterol level, the higher your risk for heart disease and stroke. The higher your HDL cholesterol level, the lower your risk.

## Cholesterol and Disease

Coronary heart disease occurs when plaque, which is made up of cholesterol, fat, calcium and other substances, builds up inside the coronary (heart) arteries. Over time, the plaque hardens and narrows the arteries, constricting the flow of oxygen-rich blood to organs and other parts of the body. When this occurs in the arteries of the brain, strokes become more likely.

Plaque may also cause blood clots that obstruct blood flow. Also, plaque may break off and float into and block small arteries, resulting in heart attack or stroke. Those with high blood cholesterol are at increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and stroke.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are 73.5 million adults (31.7%) in the U.S. with high

LDL cholesterol. Fewer than 1 of every 3 adults is effectively managing the condition and less than half (48.1%) are getting treatment. Those with high total cholesterol have about twice the risk for heart disease as those with ideal levels.

Cholesterol levels vary by race, ethnicity, and gender. In the U.S., Mexican-American men and non-Hispanic Black women tend to have the highest levels of LDL cholesterol.

## September is National Cholesterol Education Month

Although you can't control all your risk factors, you can take steps to prevent high cholesterol. Levels should be checked at least once every five years from the time you're 20 years old. The blood test generally used is called a lipid profile. It's recommended that men ages 35 and older, and women 45 and older be screened more frequently for lipid disorders.

Cholesterol levels aren't enough to predict risk, but are part of a larger equation, which includes age, blood pressure, smoking status, and use of blood pressure medicines.

Lifestyle changes can help reduce cholesterol. Choose healthier fats such as leaner cuts of meat, and low-fat dairy and monounsaturated fats found in olive and canola oils. Eliminate trans fats (margarine) and eat foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids such as salmon, mackerel, and sardines. Increase whole grains and fiber. Moderate activity (walking briskly for 40 minutes 3 times a week), quitting smoking, and losing 5% to 10% of weight also can improve levels.

## A Message from the President & CEO

*Dear Friends:*

*This September, Metropolitan Family Health Network celebrates its eleventh anniversary. We are proud that, during that time, we have increased the number and types of health services we offer. Our physicians, providers and entire staff work to ensure the care you receive is top-quality, accessible, at hours that are convenient for you and in an environment that is clean and comfortable. As a result, we have seen the number of patient visits grow to nearly 60,000.*

*Childhood cavities is the most preventable disease. Soon, we will resume providing free dental exams for children in the Jersey City Public Schools. As part of well-child exams and our Seal the Deal campaign, our pediatricians are checking children's mouths and teeth and, if necessary, are applying fluoride or making referrals for dental sealants. We urge you not to neglect neither your children's dental health nor your own.*

*We hope you will read this newsmagazine – it's packed with useful information.*

**Joan Dublin**

Joan Dublin, RN, MPA, ACHE  
President and Chief Executive Officer

# PAIN

## and What it May Mean



Although we don't want to experience pain, it's essential to our health since it tells that something within our bodies is wrong and potentially damaging. Defined as an unpleasant sensation, ranging from mild, localized discomfort to agony, pain has both physical and emotional components.

Pain's physical aspects result from nerve stimulation, while our emotions shape our interpretation of the stimulus. Pain may be contained to a specific area (as in the result of an injury) or it can be widespread (as in disorders such as fibromyalgia).

Pain is a personal and subjective experience. National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports there is no test that can assess and locate pain with precision. Health professionals rely on the patient's description of the type, timing, and location of pain. Defining pain as sharp or dull, constant or intermittent, and burning or aching may provide the best insight to the cause.

### Acute vs. Chronic Pain

There are different types of pain. Acute pain is the body's natural response to damage such as a cut, infection, or injury. Acute pain usually comes on quickly and, if treated properly, subsides within a few weeks or months. Acute pain may become chronic when the cause is difficult to treat, as in cases resulting from surgery, broken bones, burns or cuts, dental work, or childbirth.

The NIH defines chronic pain as pain that lasts more than 12 weeks, and may result from an initial injury or an ongoing illness. Chronic pain may be linked with headaches, arthritis, cancer, nerve pain, back pain, or fibromyalgia pain. Fatigue, sleep disturbance, decreased appetite, and mood changes often accompany chronic pain, and may limit a person's movements, which may result in reduced flexibility, strength, and stamina. The emotional effects of chronic pain – anxiety, anger, depression – can limit a person's ability to work and participate in everyday activities.

People with diabetes often have reduced ability to detect painful stimuli to their feet, which may become numb, so they are advised to monitor their feet to ensure that there are no sores or wounds.

If you experience ongoing (chronic) pain, be sure to mention it to your healthcare provider who will work to discover and treat the cause so you can relax and enjoy life.

## Understanding Atrial Fibrillation (AFib)

Atrial fibrillation is an electrical disorder of the upper chambers of the heart (the atria), which results in an irregular heartbeat. Also known as AFib, this heart condition decreases physical stamina, and if left untreated increases the risk of blood clots that can travel to the lungs (pulmonary embolism) or brain (stroke).

AFib causes irregular electrical signals in the heart, which can sometimes speed up to over a 150 beats per minute (normal heart rate is 60 - 100 beats per minute). When this happens the heart's two upper chambers (atria) beat irregularly and don't work in coordination with the lower two chambers (ventricles). Although there may not be symptoms, AFib can cause palpitations (the sensation of fluttering in the chest), shortness of breath, fatigue, chest pain, dizziness, or the inability to exercise.

This may lead to blood clots that are then pumped out of the heart and enter the body's general circulation process.

It's estimated that more than two million Americans have AFib. While the cause isn't always known, AFib may result from: uncontrolled high blood pressure; heart disease/history of heart attack; binge drinking (five drinks in two hours for men, four drinks in two hours for women); untreated hyperthyroidism; drug abuse; and family history of the condition. It's also the most common complication post heart surgery.

Although sleep apnea isn't proven to cause AFib, studies show a strong correlation between obstructive sleep apnea (snoring) and AFib. It is also common in athletes and can be triggered by rapid heart rate. Others at risk include those with diabetes, asthma, and other chronic medical problems.

Although AFib is much more common in adults, children can also develop this condition, but it's rare.

### The Effects of AFib

AFib can impact the circulatory, central

nervous and respiratory systems, and a person's general health. Over time, AFib can weaken the heart and cause blood to pool in the atria, increasing the risk of clotting. Heart failure occurs when the heart loses its ability to circulate enough blood throughout the body.

Those with AFib are at risk for stroke and that risk increases with age. Warning signs include sudden severe headache, facial droop, one-sided weakness, and slurred speech. AFib may also impact the respiratory system, causing fluid to back up in the lungs.

Some people with AFib may experience swollen legs, ankles, or feet. Other symptoms include weight gain, lightheadedness, a general sense of illness, irritability, and exertion during previously routine activities.

If you – or someone close to you – have any signs of AFib, be sure to call 201-478-5827 and schedule an appointment with us.



# Better Bone Health

**H**ealthy bones play a vital role in health. While emphasis is placed on getting enough calcium to develop strong bones while we're young, it's essential to maintain bone health as we age. October 12<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> marks Bone & Joint National Action Week, so let's get smart about getting stronger.

Strong bones translate to a healthier, more active lifestyle. Bones provide structure, make blood cells, protect organs, anchor muscles, and store calcium. Just like cells and skin, bones are continuously changing. New bone is always being regenerated while older bone breaks down.

When we're young, our bodies create new bone at a quicker rate than bone degenerates. For most, bone mass peaks about age 30. After that, the renewal process continues, but we lose slightly more bone mass than we gain. At age 35, women reach their peak and have all the bone density they'll ever have, so, generally for more than half of their lives, women's bone mass continues to deplete.

The good news is that a variety of lifestyle factors –including diet and exercise

– can boost bone mass. Men and premenopausal women who aren't pregnant require about the same amount of calcium—1,000 mg. per day. Once menopause starts, women's bone density tends to fall along with estrogen levels, and 1,200 mg. of calcium is generally suggested.

Although dairy is a convenient source of calcium, the body needs Vitamin D to absorb it. Orange juice and fortified milk are great calcium/Vitamin D sources. Aim for 2-3 cups of low- or nonfat milk or yogurt per day, or fortified soy products such as tofu. Vitamin D is found in salmon, sardines, and shrimp. Skin exposed to full sunlight also generates Vitamin D.

As we age, our ability to absorb nutrients lessens, and it is wise to eat spinach, bok choy, broccoli, yogurt, and bananas, which are all rich in Vitamin K and help the body make proteins for healthier bones. Cutting back on caffeine and alcohol, and quitting smoking will help. Weight-bearing exercises such as walking, jogging, jumping rope, and climbing stairs are ideal for building stronger bones and slowing loss.

## **Osteoporosis – Not Just for Women**

Osteoporosis is a condition that causes bones to become weak and brittle; sometimes so brittle that mild stresses – like coughing or bending – can cause fractures.

Race and family history play a role in developing osteoporosis, with Caucasians and Asians being at higher risk. Since women generally have less bone tissue, they're more at risk for osteoporosis than men, and risk increases at menopause due to dropping estrogen levels. People who have had eating disorders and/or stomach or weight-loss surgery, as well as Crohn's, celiac and Cushing's disease also are at greater risk.

While surveys suggest that most American men consider osteoporosis a woman's issue, the condition poses a significant threat to millions of men. Osteoporosis develops less often in men since they have larger skeletons, and their bone loss begins later and progresses more slowly. However, by age 65 or 70, men and women both lose bone mass at the same rate, which can lead to osteoporosis and more fractures and breaks.



# Dental Care Leads to Better Overall Health

Everyone wants a winning smile, but managing oral health goes well beyond flashing those pearly whites. In fact, the health of a person's teeth, gums, and mouth can have a big impact on overall health.

The mouth is filled with bacteria that is generally harmless. Good oral care, which includes daily brushing and flossing, can keep bacteria low and under control. But without proper hygiene, bacteria may cause infections like tooth decay and gum disease.

Uncontrolled oral bacteria that leads to inflammation of the gums (gingivitis), tooth roots, and jawbone (periodontitis) have also been shown to affect other areas of health. The bacteria can travel through the bloodstream to damage areas of the heart, which can lead to endocarditis (an inflammation of the heart's valves) as well as stroke.

Other diseases such as diabetes and viral infections such as HIV/AIDS, lower the body's resistance to infection, making oral problems more severe. Gum disease appears to be more frequent and severe for those with diabetes and chronic inflammation in the gums. Likewise, infections that would be minor and unnoticed in a healthy individual can be devastating

in an immunosuppressed individual with diabetes or HIV/AIDS.

Pregnant women should be vigilant about oral care. Periodontitis can contribute to premature birth and low birth weights. In elderly patients with osteoporosis, the jawbone can become less dense and cause tooth loss.

Saliva is vital to oral care since it washes away food and neutralizes acids produced by bacteria, offering protection from bacteria that may lead to disease. The reason flossing is important is that it gives saliva access to bacteria that are between the teeth and hidden beneath the gum line. Common medicines such as decongestants, antihistamines, painkillers, diuretics, and antidepressants may reduce saliva flow.

Oral health issues may be early indicators of other health issues. Inflamed/bleeding gums, continued halitosis (bad breath), and a sore, painful jaw may be signs of diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, or cancer. Good dentists and physicians make a point of examining the mouth to look for signs of disease.

#### **Be Proactive About Your Oral Health**

- Brush your teeth for two to three minutes with fluoride toothpaste at least twice

daily. Remember to brush your gums and tongue.

- Floss daily. Start with about 18 inches of floss, wind most of the floss around each middle finger, leaving an inch or two of floss to work with. Holding the floss tautly between your thumbs and index fingers, slide it gently up-and-down between your teeth. Gently curve the floss around the base of each tooth, making sure you go beneath the gum line. Never snap or force the floss, as this may cut or bruise delicate gum tissue. Use clean sections of floss as you move from tooth to tooth. Replace your toothbrush every three to four months or sooner if the bristles are frayed.

- Eat a healthy diet and limit snacks.

- Avoid tobacco use.

- Schedule regular dental checkups and cleanings – twice a year. Always let the dentist know which medications you're taking and if there have been any changes in your overall health.

- If you notice any changes such as pain, sores, swelling, or excessive bleeding, call 201-478-5800 and schedule an appointment to see one of our dentists.

# Metropolitan Family Health Network Hosts Statewide 2017 National Health Center Week Kick-off Ceremony



*Pictured here from left: U.S. Health and Human Services Region II Acting Regional Director/Executive Officer Dennis Gonzalez; U.S. Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Administration John Bardis; Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop; News 12 New Jersey Anchor Carissa Lawson; MFHN President/CEO Joan Dublin; NJPCA President/CEO Jillian Hudspeth; New Jersey Commissioner of Health Cathleen Bennett; JCETP Executive Director Jim McGreevey; and U.S. Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr.*

On Monday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, Metropolitan Family Health Network (MFHN) welcomed elected officials, dignitaries, other health care organizations and the children, men and women from the community for the annual statewide kick-off ceremony for National Health Center Week. The event was held in conjunction with New Jersey Primary Care Association (NJPCA).

An annual event, National Health Center Week celebrates New Jersey's health centers – the keys to healthier communities. One in every fifteen people in the United States depends on health center services. New Jersey health centers deliver high quality, cost effective, accessible care while serving as economic engines that help power local economies. The health centers are able to accomplish this through partnerships with local, state and federal governmental entities.

Serving as mistress of ceremonies, MFHN President and CEO Joan Dublin, along with NJPCA President and CEO Jillian Hudspeth, introduced some of the most influential officials in government and health care. Among the honored guests: John Bardis, Assistant Secretary for Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Cathleen Bennett, the Commissioner of Health for the State of New Jersey; Dennis Gonzalez, the Acting Regional Director and Executive Officer of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Region II; Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop; U.S. Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr.; Carissa Lawson, the award-winning morning anchor on News 12 New Jersey; and Jim McGreevey, former Governor and the Executive Director of Jersey City Employment and

Training Program (JCETP). In addition, representatives of U.S. Senators Robert Menendez and Cory Booker were there.

In his remarks, Mr. Bardis briefly outlined the Department of Health and Human Services' top priorities: rooting out opioid addiction; finding solutions for mental illness; and addressing childhood obesity.

Commissioner Bennett praised the work of the state's community health centers saying that they are successful because they know their communities best, and Congressman Payne stated that federally qualified health centers like Metropolitan Family Health Network are vital resources.

Mayor Fulop said Jersey City is addressing some of the issues being targeted by the federal government by addressing homelessness and providing affordable housing for seniors and veterans.

Ms. Lawson spoke about her work in promoting good health habits, and Governor McGreevey related how MFHN had helped a JCETP client improve his health so he could enter the workforce.

In addition, several organizations volunteered their services for free health screenings and provided information on good health, giveaways, music, refreshments and more. Among them: Aetna, Amerigroup, CarePoint, Horizon NJ Health, United Healthcare, Madeline Fiadini LoRe Foundation, and Women Rising.

# M.D. Spotlight: Jason T. Elliston, M.D., Pediatrics



Since September 2006, Dr. Jason Elliston has provided care for the youngest patients of Metropolitan Family Health Network. "It is my privilege to serve the children of my community," he states.

Dr. Elliston earned his Bachelor's degree at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and his medical degree from University of Medicine and Dentistry New Jersey - New Jersey Medical School in Newark, where he served his residency in Pediatrics. Following his residency, Dr. Elliston also completed a fellowship in Allergy and Immunology at UMDNJ- New Jersey Medical School's Division of Allergy, Asthma, Immunology and Rheumatology.

Dr. Elliston was Team Physician for the Jersey City Athletics and School Physician for the Jersey City Public Schools, Assistant Medical Director for Successful Encounters (Newark), and Pediatric House Physician at Holy Name Hospital (Teaneck). Prior to working here, he was Attending Physician/Director of Pediatric Grants (Reach Out & Read Program, Asthma Collaborative, CHEC Program) for the Jersey City Family Health Center.

A member of the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology and the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, Dr. Elliston's community work includes the Maintenance Asthma Therapy for Urban Pediatric Asthma Population outreach project. Fluent in English and Spanish, he also serves as a mentor and motivational speaker and enjoys spending time with his family.

## Spotlight on Staff:



Meet Louris Mikaeil, our New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (CEED) Outreach Worker.

Better known as "Suzie," Ms. Mikaeil has been with Metropolitan Family Health Network since September 2006. Her smile is warm and contagious, and she is renowned for her caring and compassionate nature. She is responsible for reaching into the community and bringing hundreds of men, women and children to MFHN to receive the cancer screenings and care they sorely need.

## Congratulations to staff with ongoing perfect attendance.

**Dr. Lynne Acierno, MD** - Internal Medicine

**Dr. Cheryl Carter, MD** - OB/GYN

**Joyce Caseres, RN** - Nurse

**Marie Lourdy Celestin**, Certified Patient Care Tech.

**Karon DelaCruz, RN** - Nursing Supervisor

**Angie Garcia, RN** - Nurse

**Soledad Javier**, Office Assistant

**Tanisha Malden, LPN** - Nurse

**Carolyn Murray-Burton, MD** - Pediatrician

**Gillian Symmonds**, Certified Dental Asst.

**Roseann Wheeler**, Certified Clinical Medical Asst.

**Dr. Hallie Williams, DDS** - Director of Dental Services

# Kids' Corner: To Eat That Sweet or Not?

Most kids we know love sweet treats like candy, cookies, cake, ice cream, cereal bars, breakfast pastries and soda. But did you know these foods are full of “added sugar.”

Sugar is not necessarily a bad thing. It is made up of elements that give us energy. Sugar is naturally in a lot of foods we eat, like fruit, dairy products and vegetables. Added sugar is sugar and syrup that is added to foods or beverages when they're made or manufactured. Foods with added sugar – like candy, cake, ice cream, soda and some juice – should be your “sometimes foods,” meaning you only eat a little bit, once in a while.

Too much sugar can cause all sorts of problems. So be very careful of foods with added sugar. (Ketchup, jams and jellies, some canned and bottled fruit, and even some snacks, all have added sugar.)



Too much sugar can ...

- Cause you to feel cranky
- Give you headaches
- Make it hard to concentrate and learn
- Lead to more colds, flus and other illnesses
- Make you chubby and make it harder to move around and play
- Give you cavities and toothaches

You can be healthier if you ...

- Eat sweets and junk food and drink soda only on special occasions
- Have a piece of fruit rather than candy, cookies, ice cream or cake and other foods with added sugar
- Brush your teeth at least twice a day
- Exercise – walk, ride your bike, run, swim, play soccer, baseball, football or another sport – at least one hour each day
- Tell everyone who wants you to eat some sugary food you know is not good for you: “No thanks. I’m sweet enough already!”



Compassionate. Quality Care... Close to Home

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