Shortness of breath was an indication of Todd Steffen’s heart condition page 2

New blood pressure guidelines mean more people are in a high risk category page 4

Todd Steffen, Dyersville, Iowa.
Heart disease and cancer. These words conjure up mental images for each of us, formed by our own battles or by experiences we have had with others dealing with a heart or cancer diagnosis. The prevalence of these often chronic diseases is profound. They are the first and second leading causes of death in the United States, in Iowa and in the communities we serve, so coordinating the best heart and cancer care experience is our top priority.

February is Heart Month, and we are happy to report good news statistically about the prevalence of cardiovascular disease. In a 2016 study, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that death rates for heart disease declined among men and women by more than 67% between 1969 and 2014; and, compared with 1969, the total number of heart disease deaths is predicted to decrease 21.3% among men and 13.4% among women by the year 2020. As you would expect, Mercy provides the entire scope of services which are second to none, so that we can meet all of your heart care needs.

The news on the cancer front is not quite so impressive. While death rates for cancer have also declined among men (21.9%) and women (14.5%) between 1969 and 2014, the number of cancer deaths is predicted to increase by greater than 90% as compared with 1969, and cancer is expected to overtake heart disease as the leading cause of death by 2020.

It is for this reason that Mercy is committed to developing a comprehensive cancer service, so that patients don’t feel they need to leave the community to get the highest quality of care.

Since my Health Watch column last fall, we have made good progress on the plans for our cancer center and, if all goes well, we hope to break ground before the end of the year. The Iowa State Health Facilities Council turned down our initial request for a certificate-of-need to provide radiation therapy in the center. However, we remain committed to developing an improved and integrated cancer service for the people of northeast Iowa for several reasons:

Dubuque has a higher-than-average incidence of cancer, a higher-than-average cancer mortality rate and, as stated above, the number of people diagnosed with cancer is expected to rise. (Cancer is not going away.)

Cancer care in Dubuque is currently fragmented. Patients and their families are required to travel from provider to provider for their care, rather than having a seamless experience with the entire care team all located under one roof. (The care will be more patient-centered.)

While most radiation is delivered on an outpatient basis, Mercy does the majority of inpatient cancer care, and when patients need radiation, an ambulance ride to another facility is suboptimal and costly. (Patients who prefer Mercy deserve access to all of the essential components of cancer care.)

There is currently not an accredited cancer program in Dubuque and patients have to leave the community to participate in clinical research trials. (Quality and access will be improved.)

Heart disease and cancer are the most prevalent diseases in our society today and our commitment is to be with you every step of the way, carefully coordinating the best care and service for the best outcomes for life.

**A happy HEART**

Happy people tend to eat healthier, exercise more, and get better sleep than those who are stressed out or depressed. Happiness causes distinct changes in your body that strengthen your immune system, decrease pain and chronic disease, and provide stress relief. In addition, happiness is linked to a lower risk of heart disease and lower blood pressure.

Music is one way to lift your spirits and improve your happiness, and we’ve gathered a playlist of popular songs to do just that. So, enjoy the music, be happy, and improve your heart health. We feel a dance party in your kitchen coming on.

- **Best Day of My Life**  
  AMERICAN AUTHORS

- **Happy**  
  PHARRELL WILLIAMS

- **I Gotta Feeling**  
  BLACK EYED PEAS

- **Don’t Stop Believing**  
  JOURNEY

- **Beautiful Day**  
  U2

- **Can’t Stop the Feeling**  
  JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

- **Put Your Records On**  
  CORINNE BAILEY RAE

- **Just the Way You Are**  
  BRUNO MARS

- **Girls Just Wanna Have Fun**  
  CYNDI LAUPER

- **Unwritten**  
  NATASHA BEDINGFIELD

- **Let It Go**  
  IDENA MENZEL

- **What Makes You Beautiful**  
  ONE DIRECTION

- **I’m Yours**  
  JASON MRAZ

- **We’re Going to Be Friends**  
  THE WHITE STRIPES

- **Walking on Sunshine**  
  KATRINA AND THE WAVES

Happiness causes distinct changes in your body that strengthen your immune system, decrease pain and chronic disease, and provide stress relief.
Dr. Steffen called with the results and diagnosed me with aortic stenosis. He said that I was already in the severe category. I thought that can't be good.”

— Todd Steffen
Many employers understand the value of offering a wellness program for their employees. Todd Steffen, of Dyersville, has participated in Medical Associates’ program for several years, which is where his wife works. After this last year’s screening, Todd also understands the value of such a program.

During Todd’s wellness physical in September, Dr. Ken Steffen detected a heart murmur that he hadn’t heard before. Dr. Steffen recommended an echocardiogram, which is a test that uses sound waves to create pictures of the heart. The test gives the doctor information about the size and shape of the heart and how well its chambers and valves are working.

“Dr. Steffen called with the results and diagnosed me with aortic stenosis,” recalls Todd. “He said that I was already in the severe category. I thought that can’t be good.”

Aortic stenosis is a narrowing of the opening of the aortic valve. This narrowing keeps the valve from opening fully, reducing blood flow to the body and making the heart work harder.

Todd met with Medical Associates cardiologist Dr. Rami Eltibi, who told him some good news: The rest of Todd’s heart was healthy. He had no sign of blockages or other heart disease. However, because of the severity of his stenosis, Dr. Eltibi recommended the need for valve replacement very soon.

“Cardiac rehab is also an education program, so patients learn healthy diet plans, about their medications, managing stress, and more.” — Elaine Thier, MSN, RN

Todd met with Medical Associates cardiovascular surgeon Dr. Lance Bezzina to discuss surgery.

“Aortic stenosis causes a two-fold problem,” explains Dr. Bezzina. “As the heart valve narrows, the heart muscle behind the valve struggles to eject the same amount of blood. The rest of the body starves for that blood and oxygen. If left untreated then his heart could develop what is called heart failure. If this progresses then a heart transplant could be needed. This is why it is important to have surgery right before or initially after symptoms develop.”

Surgery was scheduled for October 26. Dr. Bezzina and the team explained to Todd exactly what the surgery would entail and what he could expect to feel after, which Todd appreciated.

“I went into the surgery mentally prepared,” Todd says. “It’s amazing how tired you can be after a surgery. I had pretty low energy that first month.”

To help regain his strength, Todd began cardiac rehabilitation at Mercy – Dyersville, attending three days a week for an hour.

“In hindsight, Todd knows he should have paid more attention to his symptoms.

“I probably deep down felt something was wrong, but I passed it off as middle age, or being out of shape. I knew I should have had it checked, and I should have done it sooner. You know how you feel on a daily basis, and if something feels wrong, it’s a lot easier to get it checked than to have something worse happen. And yes, you might get a result that you’re not wanting to hear, but if it’ something that can be fixed, they’ll fix it.”

And as for participating in the wellness program, Todd states, “Sure enough, this was the year where they caught a major thing and probably saved my life. There’s a lot of merit to going in for your physical.”
**Q: How do the new blood pressure guidelines affect me?**

**A:** Cardiac experts recently released new, lower blood pressure guidelines. This means that nearly half of the U.S. adult population will now have high blood pressure.

**Stage 1** high blood pressure (B/P) is now defined as 130/80 – 139/90. **Stage 2** high B/P is over 140/90. An elevated B/P is the top number between 120 and 129. Normal B/P is under 120/80.

With high blood pressure, a person doubles the risk for cardiovascular complications (like heart attack or stroke) compared to people with normal blood pressure. This does not mean you will need medication, but it is a yellow ‘caution’ light for you to make some diet and lifestyle changes. Changing your diet and lifestyle can be powerful medicine.

- **Start with eating a more healthy diet** it can reduce the top number by as much as 11 points. Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- **Limit your salt intake and unhealthy fats.** Look at the food label for the word ‘sodium.’ A diet low in sodium intake is 2 - 3 grams/day.
- **Be more physically active,** and lose weight if you are overweight or obese.
- **Drink no more than two alcoholic drinks per day for men, and one for women.**
- **Reduce your stress.**

Your health care provider may advise you to monitor your blood pressure at home.

Cindy Rowley, BSN, RN

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**NURSING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS**

Mercy – Dubuque is offering five $500 scholarships to graduating high school seniors who plan to pursue a career as a registered nurse. Scholarship recipients are chosen based on class rank, ACT scores and GPAs, two letters of recommendation, a personal essay, and volunteer activities. Students must be accepted in, or plan to attend, a university or community college to study nursing.

The application and a list of eligible high schools are available at mercydubuque.com/Student-Scholarships.

Applications are due March 23, 2018.

**HEALTHY HEARTS FOR BABIES**

About 40,000 babies are born with a heart defect each year in the United States. February is National Heart Month, and to help raise awareness of heart defects in babies, Mercy Birth Center is sending each baby home with a red hat that was crocheted or knitted by Mercy volunteers. Prior to discharge, every baby born at Mercy is screened for CCHD (critical cardiac heart defect) as part of their newborn screening.

**MERCY GIFT SHOP**

Shop gifts and home decor at the Mercy Gift Shop. All proceeds support programs and services for children in Mercy's care. As always, there is no sales tax.

Monday, Thursday, and Friday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Tuesday and Wednesday: 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Heart Attacks:

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

You can never be too prepared if you or someone you know experience the symptoms of a heart attack. Remember that heart attack symptoms can vary greatly, but some common symptoms may include any or all of the following:

» Uncomfortable pressure, fullness or squeezing pain in the center of the chest

» Discomfort or pain spreading beyond the chest to the shoulders, neck, jaw, teeth, or one or both arms

» Shortness of breath

» Lightheadedness, dizziness, fainting

» Sweating

» Nausea

WHAT TO DO

If you or someone else may be having a heart attack:

» Call 911. Don’t ignore the symptoms, because if it is a heart attack, every minute matters. Calling 911 is almost always the fastest way to obtain lifesaving treatment. Even if you’re not sure it’s a heart attack, call anyway.

» Chew and swallow an aspirin, unless you are allergic to aspirin or have been told by your doctor never to take aspirin. But call 911 first.

» Take nitroglycerin, if prescribed. If you think you’re having a heart attack and your doctor has previously prescribed nitroglycerin for you, take it as directed. Do not take anyone else’s nitroglycerin, because that could put you in more danger.

» Begin CPR if the person is unconscious. If you’re with a person who might be having a heart attack and he or she is unconscious, tell the 911 dispatcher. You may be advised to begin CPR. If you haven’t received CPR training, the dispatcher will instruct you until help arrives.

» Instruct EMS to go to Mercy. Mercy has the most comprehensive heart program in the region to ensure you receive the heart care you need.

For more information about heart disease and Mercy’s heart services, go to mercydubuque.com/heart.

PEAR MAPLE SALAD in a jar

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

SALAD INGREDIENTS
2 chicken breasts, cooked and cubed
5 ounces (or 1 bag) mixed greens
1 pear, cored and chopped (about 1¼ cups)
½ cup pecans, roughly chopped
2½ cup dried cranberries
4 ounces goat cheese, crumbled

DRESSING INGREDIENTS
2 tablespoons shallot, diced
4 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
3 teaspoons pure maple syrup
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons gluten-free Dijon mustard
Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS
1 - Cook chicken breasts to an internal temperature of 165°F and cube into small pieces. Set aside.
2 - Divide salad greens among individual mason jars.
3 - Evenly divide pears, pecans, cranberries, and goat cheese between mason jars. Layer on top of salad greens.
4 - For the dressing, blend together shallot, balsamic vinegar, maple syrup, olive oil, mustard, salt and pepper until emulsified.
5 - Refrigerate salad separate from dressing until ready to use.
6 - Dress salad and top with cubed chicken prior to serving.
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE?

MERCY JUST FOR YOU WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM

Metabolism is an important factor in your ability to lose weight. Our registered/licensed dietitian team will measure your metabolism using the MedGem calorimeter and create an individualized, nutritional weight-loss plan—Just for You—that promotes healthy and lasting weight loss. Each participant will receive a detailed, customized report that provides the information you need to lose weight and keep it off.

Learn more at mercydubuque.com/weight-loss

PEAR MAPLE SALAD in a jar

It’s time to dress up your salad with these fun toppings! If you haven’t tried ‘Salad in a Jar,’ I encourage you to give it a try. It’s a quick and easy meal option on the go. Salads made with even a few ingredients make a nutrient-rich meal and can help meet recommended daily vegetable servings. Darker greens have an added health benefit as they are rich in calcium, iron, potassium, and B vitamins.”

— Stacy Huss, RD, LD

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:
389 calories, 5g saturated fat, 25g carbohydrates, 309mg sodium, 2g fiber, 19g protein