



## **Coronary Artery Disease (CAD)**

UniCare Health Plan of West Virginia, Inc. (UniCare) has a care management program for Coronary Artery Disease (CAD). This program will help you better understand and manage your CAD. We can assist you to set health goals and create a care plan that fits your lifestyle. You do not have to join the program. You are enrolled as a member of UniCare.

## **Living with CAD**

Coronary artery disease happens when fatty deposits called plaque build up inside the arteries that supply blood to your heart. When the plaque builds up, it can block the passageways and reduce the blood that gets to your heart.

We want you to know you can take control. You can take steps to help manage your condition and enjoy life. Simple steps like eating less salt and fat in your diet and taking your medications correctly can make a real difference.

We will keep your doctor informed of your condition and the services we provide you. Your case manager can help you learn how to better manage your CAD.

### **Things to know:**

- Plaque is made up of cholesterol, calcium and other things in your blood.
- The plaque inside your arteries makes them stiff and hard.
- An artery without plaque can get wider and stretch when you exercise to let more blood flow.
- An artery with plaque does not stretch. This makes the heart work harder to get the blood flow you need.
- Other illnesses and health conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes can affect your CAD.
- You may not have any symptoms that you have CAD. Many people only find out when they have a heart attack.
- There are many things you can do to slow CAD and reduce your risk of future problems.
- We can give you more information to help you manage your CAD.
- Your doctor may want to do testing to see how well your CAD is controlled.

### **Tips to monitor your CAD:**

- Your doctor may want you to take your blood pressure at home. Work with your case manager to learn about checking your blood pressure at home.
- Learn what your blood pressure reading means.
  1. Blood pressure readings have two numbers.
  2. The top number is called the Systolic, for example, the 120 in 120/80. It measures the pressure when the heart is pumping.



3. The bottom number is called the Diastolic, for example, the 80 in 120/80. It measures the pressure when the heart is resting.
- Healthy adults should have a blood pressure of 120/80 or less.
  - Hypertension or high blood pressure is 140/90 or higher.
  - When blood pressure is too high, it starts to damage the blood vessels, heart and kidneys.
  - Untreated high blood pressure can cause major health problems such as stroke, heart attack, heart failure and kidney disease.

**Learn how to recognize signs that you may be having a heart attack. Call 911 if you have any of the following symptoms:**

- Chest pain or discomfort that is crushing or squeezing, feels like pressure on your chest, and lasts more than five minutes
- If chest pain happens with any of these symptoms:
  1. Sweating
  2. Trouble breathing
  3. Nausea or vomiting
  4. Pain that moves from the chest to the neck, jaw or one or both shoulders or arms
  5. Dizziness or lightheadedness, like you may pass out
  6. A fast or irregular heartbeat
  7. Feel weak or have trouble standing up
  8. Confused or unable to answer questions
- Chest pain that has not gone away five minutes after you have taken one nitroglycerin (if prescribed by your doctor) or rested

**How to take your CAD medications:**

- You may take medicines that lower your blood pressure or lower your cholesterol. Medications are prescribed differently for each person. Your doctor will work with you to find the right medicine for you.
- If you do not take your medications the way your doctor says, the medications may not work as well. It is best to take your medications about the same time every day.
- Don't take over-the-counter medicines including cold medicines and herbal supplements without talking to your doctor. They can prevent your medications from working the right way.
- Call your doctor if you think you are having side effects from your medication.
- We can help you know how to take your medications the right way.
- We can help you understand how your medications work.



### **Ways you can improve or manage your CAD:**

- Quit smoking. Quitting smoking can make a big improvement in controlling your CAD. We have programs, and there are medications that can assist you in stopping smoking.
- Make short- and long-term goals. Goals to eat better, exercise and maintain a healthy weight can be made to fit your lifestyle. We can assist you to make healthy changes one small step at a time to improve your CAD.
- Get a flu shot every year. Ask your doctor if you should have the pneumonia vaccine.
- Limit alcohol. Ask your doctor how much, if any, alcohol is safe.

### **Support to help you manage your CAD:**

- We can help you talk to your family or caregiver about your CAD
- We can assist you in finding community programs and resources in your area
- Tips to talk with your doctor and get the most out of your visit:
  1. Ask any questions you may have about your CAD. You can write them down and take them with you to your visit.
  2. Follow your doctor's advice. If you have questions or concerns, let your doctor know.
  3. Make sure your doctor knows what medicines you are taking.

### **Important screenings:**

- Depression
- Other health conditions
- Preventive care screenings such as wellness checkups, mammograms and Pap tests

### **Other helpful information**

- [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#)
- [American Heart Association](#)
- [National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute](#)

#### Sources:

\* National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute

What is Artherosclerosis?

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/atherosclerosis/>, accessed November 8, 2013.

\* American Heart Association [www.heart.org/HEARTORG/](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/)

\* Publication: Your Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure

National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute

[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/hbp\\_low/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/hbp_low/index.htm), accessed November 8, 2013.

\*Healthfinder.gov

Use Medicines Safely

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/everyday-healthy-living/safety/use-medicines-safely>, accessed November 8, 2013.



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