



**Licking Memorial
Health Systems**

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Newark, Ohio 43055

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**Please take a few minutes to read
this month's report on patient
care quality. You'll soon discover
why Licking Memorial Hospital
is measurably different
for your health!
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**Licking Memorial
Health Systems**

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**CHF
Care**

measurably
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HEALTH TIPS

You can take steps to lower your risk for chronic heart failure. Making the following changes are recommended for a heart-healthy lifestyle:

- Lose excess weight. Consult your primary care physician for advice.
- Don't smoke.
- Eat a low-sodium diet.
- Limit your intake of fats and cholesterol.
- Watch your blood pressure.
- Exercise regularly.



...a community report on patient care quality.

CHF Care: How do we compare?

At Licking Memorial Hospital, we take pride in the care we provide. To monitor the quality of that care, we track specific quality measures and compare them to benchmark measures. Then we publish them so you can draw your own conclusions regarding your health care choices.

1 This indicator measures the average number of days chronic heart failure (CHF) patients are hospitalized during each inpatient stay. Length of stay is one indicator a hospital should consider in determining if it is using resources for inpatient care appropriately. CHF average length of stay should be close to the benchmark.

	LMH 2002	LMH 2003	Benchmark ⁽¹⁾
Average length of stay for CHF patients	3.9 days	3.7 days	4.8 days

2 Inpatient mortality measures the percentage of inpatient deaths among all CHF patients admitted to Licking Memorial Hospital.

	LMH 2002	LMH 2003	Benchmark ⁽¹⁾
CHF inpatient mortality	4.1%	2.6%	3.7%

3 The left ventricle is the chamber of the heart that pumps blood out of the heart and into the body. Measuring left ventricular function (LVF) helps determine how well a patient's left ventricle is working.

	LMH 7/02-12/02	LMH 2003	Benchmark ⁽²⁾
LVF assessment	88%	93%	84%

4 Medications beneficial to many CHF patients include angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, Beta blockers, and angiotensin-receptor blockers (ARBs). ACE inhibitors and ARBs have been shown to lower mortality and improve functional capacity and quality of life. Beta blockers can reverse or prevent some of the health effects associated with heart failure. Patients treated with beta blockers may see significant improvement in heart function after three months.

	LMH 7/02-12/02	LMH 2003	Benchmark
CHF patients on ACE at discharge	84%	85%	75% ⁽²⁾
CHF patients on Beta at discharge	N/A ⁽³⁾	77%	90% ⁽⁴⁾
LMHS office patients on ACE or ARB	LMH 7/03-9/03 97.6%	LMH 10/03-12/03 98.4%	LMH Goal greater than 90%

5 It is vital that CHF patients be involved in their own care to reduce health complications and improve quality of life. They need to monitor their weight, limit their salt intake, and take their medications regularly. Health care providers need to give thorough discharge instructions to help these patients effectively manage their condition. The LMH goal for having all discharge instructions completed by CHF patients is 100 percent.

All discharge instructions completed		
LMH 7/02-12/02	LMH 2003	Benchmark ⁽²⁾
73%	85%	47%

Data Footnotes:

(1) Comparative data from January through September 2003 from over 330 hospitals in the Midas comparative database project.

(2) Comparative data from third quarter 2003 from the Midas clinical database, representing over 20,700 patients.

(3) Data collection began in January 2003.

(4) Benchmark indicates LMH goal due to unavailability of recent benchmark data.

Exercising to Fight CHF and Hypertension

A PATIENT'S STORY

While participating in the Licking Memorial Hospital (LMH) cardiac rehabilitation program, Helen Imscher-Thoma noticed that her weight suddenly was climbing. She met with her cardiologist, who diagnosed Helen with chronic heart failure (CHF) and prescribed medication.

CHF is a condition in which the heart is weakened so that it doesn't pump blood as efficiently as it should. Blood returning to the heart backs up, or congests, in the veins. Excess fluid is forced from the blood vessels into tissues – usually in the feet and legs and abdomen – resulting in swelling. Blood also can back up in the blood vessels of the lungs, forcing fluid into the lungs and causing shortness of breath. The kidneys may not eliminate fluids from the body well, compounding the problem of excess fluid elsewhere.

"There are different causes of heart failure," said LMH Cardiology Patient Care Supervisor Patty Merrick, C.N.P. "In Helen's case, hypertension was an underlying factor." Hypertension – or high blood pressure – also causes the heart to work harder than it should and can cause the heart to thicken. The increased thickness of the heart muscle

leads to increased pressures inside the heart. In some cases, the squeezing function remains normal.

Reducing sodium intake, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly and taking medications as prescribed all help control both CHF and hypertension, Patty said. Maintaining blood pressure of less than 140/90 can reduce an individual's risk of further progression of the disease. Helen now tries to do all of the above to improve her heart health.

In addition to hypertension, Helen had blocked arteries to her heart. Within a 27-month period beginning in October 2001, she had three surgeries to insert a total of six stents in her arteries. A stent is a mesh tube that holds a blocked artery open to improve blood flow to the heart and relieve chest pain.

Following each surgery in Columbus, Helen participated in the 12-week cardiac rehab program at Licking Memorial. Program participants use treadmills, stationary bikes and arm strengthening equipment to improve blood circulation and increase physical stamina.

"It's a great program," Helen said. "It sure gets you back on your feet again. Otherwise, I would probably just be a couch potato."

(continued on next page)



Helen Imscher-Thoma has wanted to run ever since she was in the first grade, and she's earned a number of trophies and medals for her efforts. Although heart problems have kept her from competing recently, Helen is optimistic that she'll race again.

“The Cardiology Department at Licking Memorial has pulled me through. They take care of me.”

Hypertension Can Lead to Chronic Heart Failure

HYPERTENSION – OR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE – IS OFTEN CALLED THE “SILENT KILLER” BECAUSE THERE ARE NO SYMPTOMS. THE ONLY WAY TO FIND OUT IF YOU HAVE HYPERTENSION IS TO HAVE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKED.

Many people have high blood pressure for years without knowing it. The American Heart Association reports that an estimated one in four adults in the United States has high blood pressure. However, because there are no symptoms, nearly one-third don't know they have it.

Stroke, heart attack, kidney failure and chronic heart failure (CHF) are serious risks of uncontrolled high blood pressure. CHF is a condition in which the heart is weakened so that it doesn't pump blood as efficiently as it should. As a result, blood returning to the heart backs up, or congests, in the veins. Excess fluid is forced from the blood vessels into tissues – usually in the feet and legs and abdomen – resulting in swelling. Blood also can back up in the blood vessels of the lungs, forcing fluid into the lungs and causing shortness of breath. The kidneys may not eliminate fluids from the body well, compounding the problem of excess fluid elsewhere.

Licking Memorial Hospital Cardiology Patient Care Supervisor Patty Merrick, C.N.P., said patients tend not to take seriously enough the risks associated with hypertension. “Hypertension is not just a risk for coronary artery disease; it's a disease in its own state,” she said. “That's why it is so important for adults to regularly have their blood pressure checked.”

During a blood pressure check, the force

of the blood against artery walls when the heart beats and rests is measured. Systolic pressure – the top number – is the higher pressure. It's measured when the heart contracts to pump blood to the body. Diastolic pressure represents the pressure when the heart relaxes between beats. Blood pressure below 120/80 is considered ideal for adults. A reading of 140/90 is high.

Have your blood pressure checked regularly to reduce your risk of being harmed by the “silent killer.” Consult your primary care physician for more information, or call our Physician Referral Service at 348-4014 to make an appointment with a member of the Licking Memorial Hospital Medical Staff.



How is Your Blood Pressure?

(Below levels are for adults ages 18 and older who are not on high blood pressure medicine and who do not have a short-term illness.)

Normal

systolic – less than 120 and
diastolic – less than 80

Prehypertension

systolic – 120-139 or
diastolic – 80-89

Your blood pressure could be a problem. Make healthy changes in what you eat and drink, be physically active, and lose extra weight. If you have diabetes, see your doctor.

Hypertension

systolic – 140 or higher or
diastolic – 90 or higher

You have high blood pressure. Ask your doctor or nurse how to control it.

Source: The Seventh Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure.

A Patient's Story

(continued)

Helen continues to exercise from home, where she has a treadmill and a stationary bike. The 83-year-old Heath resident is looking forward to returning to a longtime passion: running. “I've wanted to run ever since I was in first grade,” Helen said. She competed in 10K races for years but had to stop when her heart problems started.

“My goal is to run again,” Helen said. “If I could do just a little race – even a mile – I would be happy.”

Helen credits the LMH Cardiology Department with helping her keep focus on her heart health. “The Cardiology Department at Licking Memorial has pulled me through,” she said. “They take care of me.”