

## American Heart Month

LAWRENCEVILLE - With Valentine's Day just around the corner, many Americans view February as the month of love.

More importantly it's also American Heart Month, as the American Heart Association and many other organizations spread the word about heart health, education and disease prevention. Heart disease is the leading killer of Americans, as it takes the lives of 2,200 people each day. About one out of four American deaths are due to heart disease, according to the AHA. Additionally, 103 million Americans have high blood pressure and 6.5 million are living with heart failure. Should heart issues arise, the Cardiac Rehabilitation Department at Lawrence County Memorial can help you bounce back.

Penny Martin, Cardiac Rehabilitation and Cardiopulmonary Director at the hospital, says a 36-session program is generally prescribed. Patients will usually visit each Monday, Wednesday and Friday, either in the morning or the afternoon.

"The goal is to increase their endurance and get their heart and body back to having more oxygen," said Martin.

Patients will usually start their recovery slowly, perhaps with just five to 10 minutes on a treadmill.

"They may be just crawling on the treadmill, taking small steps," Martin said.

In some cases, she said, rehabilitation is done on a recumbent bicycle, or just by using the arms. At all times, she says, the patient is wearing a heart monitor.

"We're very cautious," she said. "We want them to feel like all the precautions are being taken." Giving the patients confidence to exercise is important.

"After having been through what they've been through, it's not that they don't want to exercise, but they're afraid to," she said. "They're afraid that they might have another event. We give them confidence, because we're monitoring them and educating them on what's being done."

As the sessions continue, the workouts become more strenuous. Progress happens on an almost-daily basis.

"At the end, they just feel wonderful," she said. "They feel like they've accomplished something, and it makes us happy, too."

Aside from Martin, Robert Brooks and Marshall Thomason are respiratory therapists. Dianne Angle is a nurse that works in the department.

Ten tips for a healthy heart, according to the American Heart Association

1. Stop smoking: It's the best thing that can be done for the heart and overall health.

Know your numbers:

2. Know your numbers: Maintaining a healthy weight, blood pressure and total cholesterol can play a significant role in maintaining a healthy heart. 3. Screen for Diabetes: A physician can help determine appropriate goals.

Screen for diabetes: Untreated diabetes can lead to heart disease, among many other complications.

4. Get active: Heart pumping physical activity not only helps to prevent cardiovascular disease but can also improve overall mental and physical health.

5. Build some muscle: Strength training compliments cardiovascular exercise by toning muscles and burning fat. It can also improve daily functional movements, decreasing the chance of injury.

6. Eat smart: A healthy diet full of heart-smart foods is essential to a healthy heart and lifestyle. Salmon, nuts, berries and oats are just a few of the heart “superfoods” that may help reduce the risk of atherosclerosis.
7. Limit junk food: It’s important to limit intake of nutrient-poor junk foods. Added sugars, saturated fat and excessive sodium can all negatively impact heart health, as well as overall physical health.
8. Stress less: Stress increases cortisol, which leads to weight gain, a key risk factor for heart disease. Stress can also lead to other unhealthy habits and decrease overall happiness.
9. Sleep more: Sleep restores the body, helps decrease stress and increases overall happiness. To reap full benefits clocking seven hours of sleep each night is key.
10. Smile more: A happy heart is a healthy heart. Making time for enjoyable activities helps relieve stress and improves the overall mood.