

## Heart Care Q&A

Is your heart keeping the beat? Cardiologist **Steven Schwartz, MD**, spoke to the Union Leader recently about the latest cardiac technology and ways to improve your heart health. Following are excerpts from the article published in the Union Leader Sunday News on January 29, 2012.



### **How is cardiac technology becoming more effective?**

New pacemakers have become more user-friendly, meaning individuals with the device are now able to have MRI tests.

“Device manufacturers changed the design of the wire that goes to the heart so that it doesn’t build up heat. The circuitry has also been redesigned so that it is not affected by magnetic energy which caused previous models to reprogram themselves and potentially cause thermal injury,” said Dr. Schwartz.

Implantable defibrillators (ICD) have become smarter. Dr. Schwartz stated, “ICDs, which act as an internal EKG, are now better able to discern a life-threatening situation and one that would go away on its own.”

### **After being inactive for a while, what’s the best way to start an exercise program?**

The first thing to do is to check with your doctor. Next is to start a program slowly, like walking for 30 minutes a day. Then, as you progress, do something you enjoy doing that keeps you moving. If you like watching television, Dr. Schwartz suggested putting the treadmill in front of the TV or exercise while listening to music on an iPod. He emphasizes the necessity to keep moving and choosing an activity that you are interested in, otherwise you may not stick with it. Being patient is the key; the results will come if you keep at it.

### **Why is it dangerous not to exercise?**

With a sedentary lifestyle, you are burning fewer calories and gaining weight. These are factors that can increase your risk for high cholesterol and other health complications that may put stress on your heart. Regular exercise not only improves your good cholesterol (HDL) and burns calories it makes your body function better. “Exercise makes the skeletal muscles more efficient because they are better able to extract oxygen from the blood better, and utilize the blood more efficiently,” Dr. Schwartz added.

### **What’s the best diet for your heart health?**

According to Dr. Schwartz, the best diet is, “the one you will follow.” While there are many fad diets that help people lose weight, Dr. Schwartz said they are sometimes hard to maintain. Common sense tells us the right diet is one that is a well-balanced mix of fruits, vegetables, protein, a small amount of fat and everything else in moderation.

Dr. Schwartz is a cardiologist with Lahey Cardiology at The Medical Center in affiliation with Southern New Hampshire Medical Center.