

# Heart Health is a Lifelong Process

by Karel Juhl

**S**pecific lifestyle changes have been proven to prevent the progression of heart disease: It's that simple.

If you smoke, quit.

Eat a healthier diet.

Exercise more.

Limit your alcohol intake.

Reduce stress.

But like all things worthwhile, a healthier lifestyle takes time and a bit of work. Fortunately, help is available.

The Michigan Athletic Club (MAC), part of the Sparrow Health System, has several programs in place to help you live a longer, healthier life – and you don't need to be a member to benefit.

**8 Weeks to a Healthy Lifestyle** teaches the basics of nutrition and exercise in a small group setting. Each weekly two-hour session begins with an instructional lecture, followed by an hour of exercise. Participants are introduced to weight training, walking on a treadmill, water exercise and more.

"We give them a lot of different

options," says MAC Fitness Director Chris Johnson. "The class opens their eyes to what is available to them. It's a great class to get started in, and is not at all intimidating." Non-members also receive a pass for additional exercise time during the eight week session.

In the **Fresh Start** program, participants meet one-on-one with a health professional for a complete evaluation – body composition, heart rate, blood pressure, medications. The results dictate a personalized nutrition and exercise program. "We hook them up with a personal trainer and work with them twice a week for eight weeks," says Johnson. Fresh Start can be started at any time.

Another option offered by the MAC is **personal training**. Several of the MAC's 26 trainers are certified exercise specialists, specially qualified to work with individuals whose medical history requires special attention. "Our trainers have varying qualifications," says Johnson, "so we have a lot of options in finding the right

trainer for just about everyone.

"Many times people have two or more health problems that limit them to doing cardiovascular exercise to improve their heart and lungs. We help them get back to more normal functions by looking at their strengths and weaknesses. That's where personal training really comes in."

Whether you're making lifestyle changes to prevent heart attack or to recover from one, it's an on-going process.

"Bypass surgery only circumvents heart disease," says Johnson. "You may feel great and ready to go, but you really need to start changing your lifestyle. We have a knowledgeable staff here, and the education you'll receive will make a big difference."

*For information about the Michigan Athletic Club or any of the program mentioned here, call (517) 337-0002.*