Dealing with supraventricular tachycardia or SVT has been a way of life for Newport’s Jeri Pishvai, 61, who has suffered with the condition since she was a child. SVT, an abnormal heart rhythm that causes the heart to suddenly start racing, became a daily struggle for decades of her life.

“Most episodes of SVT are caused by faulty electrical connections in the heart,” said Samaritan Heart & Vascular Institute Electrophysiologist, Jeff Hsing, MD. “Heart rates greater than 180 beats per minute are not unusual during an attack, which can occur without warning and can cause fainting, weakness, lightheadedness and chest pain.”

Pishvai has never forgotten her first SVT attack, which occurred when she was 7 years old.

“I was playing hide and seek with friends, and passed out while I was hiding in my closet,” Pishvai said. “It was scary but I ignored it and chalked it up to playing hard all day long with my friends.”

But the attacks kept coming. To cope, Pishvai learned techniques like lying on the floor and breathing deeply to help get an attack under control. But as she got older, it became increasingly difficult to stop the attacks.

(...continues on page 2)
“I’ve spent my entire life trying not to trigger an attack,” she said. “Just walking too much or even bending over to do some gardening could cause an attack. It controlled my life. I wasn’t really living.”

In addition to not really enjoying her life, Pishvai also wasn’t getting much rest.

“When I would sleep at night, there was always this buzzing inside my body. My heart would race throughout the night. I’d wake up most mornings feeling like I’d run a marathon,” said Pishvai. “I was tired all of the time.”

And, for Pishvai, getting people in the medical profession to listen to her was difficult.

“People like me suffer with SVT for years without it being captured on an ECG (electrocardiogram) tracing. And it’s hard to get anyone to believe you,” said Pishvai. “I can’t tell you how many times I was told there wasn’t anything that could be done and that it was all in my head.”

After a severe attack in 1990, Pishvai ended up in a Portland hospital where a cardiac specialist concluded she did have an issue with her heart. She was prescribed Digoxin, a medication commonly used to treat atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter. While the medicine helped her keep SVT under control, the attacks never fully went away.

It wasn’t until last July, after experiencing a severe SVT attack while visiting friends in Corvallis, that paramedics were able to get a reading of her racing heart. Pishvai finally had the proof she needed and was considered a candidate for ablation.

“I was excited, but I had a lot of anxiety. After all, it is my heart we’re talking about,” said Pishvai. “I was referred to Dr. Hsing and Samaritan Heart & Vascular Institute by my primary doctor in Corvallis, and I am so grateful. They were so patient and always listened to me. I had felt so ignored for so long, I am so very grateful to them for giving me my life back.”

According to Hsing, “An ablation allows us to eliminate the abnormal electrical connection that causes SVT. During the procedure, small catheters are inserted into the veins and threaded up into the heart. We then pinpoint the tissue in the heart which is disrupting or causing the abnormal electrical signals and burn it away with radiofrequency energy.”

“Catheter ablation offers a very high success rate and a low complication rate to cure a condition that is often very symptomatic and troublesome for the patient,” said Dr. Hsing. “It allows patients like Jeri to live without the fear of a reoccurrence of their arrhythmia.”

Pishvai underwent the ablation procedure in September and now, she says that she’s learning how to live and looking forward to living what she calls her “new life.”

Free Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies series offers heart health seminars

Samaritan Health Services’ new Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies seminar series will help you learn about heart health, free of charge, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on the following dates:

**Corvallis**
- May 14, Learn to prevent a stroke
- June 11, Heart rhythm disorders
- Sept. 10, Peripheral artery disease and ankle brachial index screening

**Newport**
- May 9, Vanquish varicose veins

Registration for these free seminars and others offered by Samaritan Health Services may be completed online at [samhealth.org/BeHealthy](http://samhealth.org/BeHealthy), or by calling 1-855-873-0647.
“I used to put as little effort as possible into my daily activities because I was afraid of an SVT attack. I can’t tell you how many times in my life I’ve fainted in public. I always was trying to avoid that,” said Pishvai.

“But now, life is a whole new experience. Most of my life, I felt like I was like living with an old refrigerator in my chest. I was so used to it I didn’t notice it. After Dr. Hsing did the ablation, it was like the old refrigerator was unplugged. Now, the buzzing inside of my body has stopped and I can do all of the things I’ve always wanted to do and not live in fear. I can’t wait!”

Read more about electrophysiology and Jeff Hsing, MD, on the cover.
Two years ago, Albany resident Elke Asleson, now age 60, had accepted that painful varicose veins might be part of her life indefinitely. After all, she’d been dealing with the condition in her right leg since her early 30s and had undergone three unsuccessful procedures. Then she heard about Toshio Nagamoto, MD.

“My family physician told me about Dr. Nagamoto and the VNUS Closure procedure,” said Asleson. “As an avid swimmer, runner, coach and physical education teacher, I was very uncomfortable wearing the compression stockings and dealing with pooling blood and bad circulation. I’d never heard of VNUS before.”

Asleson had undergone three previous ligation surgeries — a procedure known as vein stripping where one or more incisions are made (usually in the groin or leg) and a special wire is inserted into the vein to remove it. In each instance, Asleson's bulging veins reoccurred.

“The recovery from ligation was painful,” she said. “My leg had to be wrapped for weeks and I was on crutches for a while.”

The VNUS closure procedure is minimally invasive, done using a catheter which is inserted into a vein and then radiofrequency to shrink and close it. After sealing the vein shut, blood naturally reroutes to healthy veins. Asleson went for a consultation with Nagamoto in Corvallis and came away eager to undergo the VNUS procedure.

“Dr. Nagamoto is such a great listener,” she said. “He took a lot of time to talk with me and explained everything. And his clinic staff were all so caring, too.”

Asleson had the VNUS procedure right in the clinic, with only local anesthesia. She brought a book and read for the duration of her 45-minute procedure.

“I felt great the next day,” she recalled.

The severity of Asleson’s vein condition required a second in-office procedure, a possibility that Dr. Nagamoto explained to her in their first meeting.

“Elke had very serious reflux (50 percent), meaning that her valves were allowing blood to flow backwards in her leg, when it should be going toward the heart,” said Nagamoto.

“Occasionally, we have patients who need a follow-up procedure. Ultimately, we have great success with all cases because we customize the treatments carefully and use a critical eye to make sure we find the right solution.”

For Asleson, success has meant getting back to her active lifestyle without the pain and heaviness in her leg that she’d become accustomed to. She’s also pleased with the improved appearance of her leg.

“I feel great,” she said. “It’s been two years since my procedure and I’m so happy with the results. Dr. Nagamotio is amazing — I’ve run into people around town who had him as their surgeon for very serious conditions and they rave about him. He fixed my varicose veins and if I ever need major surgery, I want him to be my surgeon!”

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Local woman finally gets relief after living with painful varicose veins for decades

Toshio Nagamoto, MD
3615 NW Samaritan Drive, Suite 201
Office hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday
(541) 768-5930

VNUS Closure at Samaritan Heart & Vascular Institute

Building healthier communities together
“I feel great. It’s been two years since my procedure and I’m so happy with the results. Dr. Nagamoto is amazing… He fixed my varicose veins and if I ever need major surgery, I want him to be my surgeon!”

Elke Asleson

The following surgeons offer VNUS Closure at Samaritan Heart & Vascular Institute. Call for more information.

Dana Penner, MD
3615 NW Samaritan Drive, Suite 201
Office hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday
(541) 768-5930

Mark Anthony Taylor, MD
3600 NW Samaritan Drive, Suite 227
Office hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday
(541) 768-5223
It’s easy to be confused when it comes to fat. After years of being told to eliminate it from your diet, it’s hard to believe that there is fat that really is good for you. But it’s true. You don’t need to avoid all fats to be healthy. According to Sara Thomas, RD, clinical nutrition manager at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center, “When it comes to fat, the type of fat is what’s most important, making sure you’re eating a good balance of the right kinds of fats. Unsaturated fats can actually protect the heart, while there is evidence that shows saturated fats and trans fats increase your risk for type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease and insulin resistance.”

Foods that are high in unsaturated fats, or the good fats, are heart healthy and include salmon, nuts, seeds and avocados. These healthy fats are essential parts of a balanced diet and help maintain a healthy body, heart and brain.

Saturated fats are mostly from animals and are found in cheeses, meat, whole milk and cream, butter and ice cream products. When using these foods, it is important to select the lower fat option and trim off extra fat. The average daily limit is 20 grams saturated fat a day, but a 16 gram limit daily is best if you already have heart disease or diabetes.

Trans fats are most commonly found in cakes, cookies, doughnuts and French fries. Eliminating these from your diet entirely or making these foods at home with healthier ingredients is recommended for a healthy diet.

According to Thomas, swapping the types of fats you eat can have a positive impact on your health. “There is also strong evidence that shows if you replace 10 grams of saturated fats each day with 10 grams of unsaturated fats that you will decrease your risk for disease,” said Thomas.

If you’re ready to make the switch from bad fats to good fats, Thomas suggests following these tips:

- Read labels to limit saturated fat per serving: 5 percent daily value is low, 10 percent is medium, 20 percent is high.
- Read labels for trans fats. Zero trans fat is best and 2 grams per day should be your maximum.
- Choose canola, olive or peanut oil for cooking and baking.
- Use tub or squeeze (not stick) margarine labeled trans fat free.
- Cook, drain and rinse crumbled ground beef with hot water to remove half the fat.
- Choose lean meats such as chicken or turkey. For beef and pork, look for loin or round cuts and for a solid red color. White streaks are fat.
- Trim the extra fat off meat and take the skin off chicken.
- Decrease daily meat and cheese intake to 6 ounces per day.
- Eat a handful of nuts almost every day. There is evidence that this can decrease risk for heart attack by 30 to 50 percent.
- Eat 6 to 12 ounces of fish a week. Salmon and sardines are especially good.
- Drink low fat milk — 1 percent, skim, soy or almond.
- Switch to equal mix of shredded mozzarella/cheddar cheese for 40 percent less saturated fat.
- Eat out no more than three times each week and avoid fried foods.
- Add 2 to 4 Tbsp of seeds to your diet each day. Sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds and ground flaxseed are best. 

For a complete list of tips and more information on how you can get the healthy fats your body needs, visit samhealth.org/HeartHealthGuide.
Q. Is dark chocolate really good for your heart?
A. Yes, but moderation is key. The benefits of dark chocolate include reduced risk for heart disease, lower blood pressure, higher healthy HDL cholesterol, less LDL oxidation damage and lower levels of inflammation. While these are all wonderful for your health, be sure you’re not going overboard. It’s important to balance all of the health benefits from chocolate with a healthy daily caloric intake.

Look for dark chocolate that is 50 percent or more cocoa and loaded with flavanols, the natural plant chemicals that provide part of the heart benefit. Research has found that 30 to 120 mg of flavanols each day can be beneficial. Both Lindt* and Dove* are examples of brands offering dark chocolates that test high in flavanols.

* Brand names are mentioned for educational purposes and do not imply endorsement.

Q. I’ve recently been prescribed Coumadin and heard that eating leafy green vegetables will impact the medication. Do I need to stop eating these types of foods?
A. Avoiding leafy greens may be easier for those taking Coumadin, but avoiding all vitamin K foods is never the answer. Vitamin K is important for healthy bones and arteries. And leafy greens also contain a host of nutrients for the eyes, skin, heart and other parts of your body.

Coumadin works best when you keep your intake of vitamin K fairly constant from day to day. Keep in mind that the vitamin K levels in a half cup of cooked leafy greens like spinach or kale is around 550 percent the daily value so small changes can cause big problems. Eating more leafy greens than usual can make your Coumadin too weak to do its job of clot prevention. Or if you eat leafy greens every day but then stop, missing the vitamin K can make your usual Coumadin dose too strong, which makes bleeding more likely.

If you do make significant changes in your vitamin K intake, get monitored more often to find a new dose of Coumadin that will rebalance the clotting system.

Looking for an alternative to spinach? The following options have vitamin K equal to a half cup of cooked spinach:

- 1 1/2 cups raw spinach
- 2/3 cup cooked beet greens
- 1/2 cup cooked collard greens
- 3/4 cup cooked dandelion greens
- 1/2 cup cooked kale from fresh
- 1/3 cup kale, frozen then cooked
- 4 1/2 cups raw green leaf lettuce
- 7 1/2 cups raw romaine lettuce

Q. Do I have to eat fish to get all of the benefits of omega-3 or can I get what I need from fish oil supplements?
A. Getting your omega-3 from fish rather than pills has many advantages. In just 3 ounces of salmon you not only get the omega-3 fats of three fish oil pills but also much more. For example, a 3-ounce portion of salmon also provides almost a day’s worth of vitamin D plus antioxidants, B vitamins, potassium, magnesium and selenium. And while heart disease risk can drop 20 percent with fish oil pills, it can drop up to 50 percent by eating 4 to 8 ounces of fish each week. Bottom line? Get your omega-3 fats one way or the other but eat fish when you can!
Heart health resources near YOU

Cardiac rehabilitation
Cardiac rehabilitation blends monitored exercises and heart-related education to help you develop a heart-healthy lifestyle. Insurance may cover part or all of the cost of this class. A physician referral is required.
Albany, (541) 812-5441
Corvallis, (541) 768-5323 or 768-6285
Lebanon, (541) 451-7888 or 451-7178
Newport, (541) 574-4856

Cardiovascular health and prevention programs
Receive help starting an exercise program and learn ways to prevent heart problems in the future. Insurance may cover part or all of the cost of this class. A physician referral may be required.
Albany, (541) 812-5441
Corvallis, (541) 768-4538
Lebanon, (541) 451-7888

Cholesterol screenings
Learn what your cholesterol levels are by testing at any of the following screenings. Testing is offered weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the hospital lab. Drop-ins are welcome.
Albany, (541) 812-4150
Corvallis, (541) 768-5059
(Now in the Neville Building, 3615 NW Samaritan Drive, Suite 104)
Lebanon, (541) 451-7135 or (541) 258-2101
Lincoln City, (541) 996-7176
Newport, (541) 574-1812

Heart health education group
Education and support for people who have a heart condition and information for those who simply want to know more about heart disease.
Albany
Tuesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m.
Call for information: (541) 812-5441

Lebanon
Call for information: (541) 451-7178

Newport
Call for information: (541) 574-4856

Pulmonary rehabilitation
Participants will learn ways to increase activity levels and decrease shortness of breath. Classes include a combination of exercise and education. Insurance may cover part or all of the cost of this class. A physician referral is required.
Albany
Tuesday and Thursday afternoons
Call for information: (541) 812-5443

Corvallis
Call for information: (541) 768-6285

Lebanon
Tuesdays and Thursdays
Call for information: (541) 451-7515

Newport
Tuesdays and Thursdays
Call for information: (541) 574-4856

Stroke support
People who have suffered a stroke and their loved ones/caregivers will learn more about their condition and share experiences.
Corvallis
First Tuesdays, 1:30 to 3 p.m.
Call for information: (541) 768-5157
Yummy salmon dip

By Marian Smith, Warm Springs Indian Reservation, modified by Sara Lee Thomas, RD, Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center

Ingredients

- 14 oz canned salmon Wild Alaskan red salmon
- 1/2 bunch green onions, chopped
  (Tip: use scissors to quickly cut green onions)
- 1/4 tsp liquid smoke
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp horseradish
- 8 oz fat-free cream cheese
- Pinch of parsley flakes

Directions

• Drain salmon and remove any visible bones or skin
• Mix all ingredients in a small bowl
• Refrigerate until ready to eat
• Serve with Rye Krisp* crackers and baby carrots for a healthy no-cook meal or snack

Nutrition and percent daily value per 1/4 cup serving (makes 12 servings)

• Excellent source of heart-healthy omega-3 fats: 500 to 600mg omega-3 fats (equal to 2 fish oil pills!)
• Lower saturated fat from 20% to 3% by using fat-free cream cheese instead of full-fat cream cheese.
• One serving: 70 calories, 3g fat (5%), 0.5g saturated fat (3%), 2g carb (1%), 0g fiber (0%), 9g protein, 250mg sodium (10%).

* Brand names are mentioned for educational purposes and do not imply endorsement.

SHS, OSU team up to provide heart screenings to student athletes

Samaritan Health Services has partnered with Oregon State University to provide electrocardiogram screenings, known as EKGs, to all of the university’s student athletes. The program began as part of a 2012 NCAA study, which was developed to assess the feasibility of screening every Division I athlete for heart abnormalities that may trigger trauma.

The study was led by principal investigator Jonathan Drezner, MD, and included 13 other universities from across the country. The findings are currently being evaluated by the research team and will be published later this year.

"After the study concluded, we felt it was important to continue to evaluate athletes in this manner," said Douglas Aukerman, MD, senior associate athletic director for sports medicine at Oregon State University.

"Current NCAA recommendations for cardiac screening for college athletes include a physical exam, listening to the heart and a blood pressure evaluation. But we want to further examine opportunities to provide EKGs in a cost-effective manner in order to determine if the test is a valuable tool overall in evaluating risk for sudden cardiac death."

In addition to EKG screenings, Samaritan Health Services is now providing an important diagnostic test — an echocardiogram — for a subset of higher-risk student athletes. An echocardiogram, often referred to simply as an echo, is a type of ultrasound test that is especially useful for detecting problems with the heart valves, evaluating congenital heart disease and can give a general idea of the overall function of the heart muscle.

According to a recent survey, half of all colleges and universities do EKG screenings for athletes, and only half of those are providing echocardiograms, like Oregon State University and Samaritan Health Services are doing.

"This program really puts us on the cutting edge of cardiovascular evaluation of student athletes," said Cardiologist Tom Marker, director of cardiac rehab and echocardiography.

"Currently, there is a lack of data as to whether or not EKGs and echos are useful in keeping student athletes safe as they perform at such a high level," said Marker. "Our hope is that through this program we’re able to gather critical data that will allow us to determine whether these tools can help prevent sudden death in student athletes. In addition, it is a privilege to work with OSU, Dr. Aukerman and these student athletes."
National certification renewed in Lebanon rehab

The Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation Department of Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital recently earned cardiac rehab re-certification from the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation.

“Certification means we adhere to strict standards of practice,” said Rachel Lasselle, MS, lead case manager for the department. “I am proud of the dedication and professionalism of our staff, which is reflected in this certification.”

The Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation Departments of Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center, Samaritan Albany General Hospital and Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital have also earned national certifications in cardiac and/or pulmonary rehabilitation. For more information, call the Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation Department in your area.

Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center (Corvallis): (541) 768-5323 or 768-6285
Samaritan Albany General Hospital: (541) 812-5441
Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital: (541) 451-7888 or 451-7178
Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital (Newport): (541) 574-4856

Looking for a healthy way to add some flavor to your menu? Try this no-salt seasoning blend to spice up mealtime. Not only will your food taste delicious, these ingredients each boast incredible health benefits, including boosting immunity and circulation, improving blood pressure and digestion, and being anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and anti-oxidant. Bon appetit!

**Ingredients**

- 6 Tbsp dried oregano
- 2 Tbsp onion powder
- 6 Tbsp dried basil
- 2 Tbsp dried marjoram
- 2 Tbsp garlic powder
- 2 Tbsp dried thyme
- 1 Tbsp dried rosemary
- 1 1/2 tsp black pepper

**Directions**

Combine all ingredients. Blend is best when stored in a tightly closed container or shaker. Use in salads, salad dressing, soups or with chicken, fish or vegetables.
Get fit: Steps to getting started

We know that exercising is good for us. Not only can it reduce the risk for chronic disease, it can help us lose weight, improve self-esteem and increase our energy. But getting off the couch and getting moving is often our biggest challenge. After all, where does one even begin?

First, find an activity you enjoy doing.

“Exercise doesn’t have to be an exhausting ordeal that you dread,” said Angie Gallagher, registered clinical exercise physiologist and Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehab manager at Samaritan Albany General Hospital. “There’s an exercise for everyone. And if you’re doing something you like, it’ll be easier to make it a permanent part of your life.”

Next, Gallagher recommends having the three Cs in order:

• **Consistency:** Make a regular effort to include exercise in your day. If you begin to do something over and over, it will eventually become a habit. Once exercise is that for you, it’ll become a natural part of your life. And Gallagher stresses even if you only have 10 minutes, there are exercises you can do like going for a brisk 10-minute walk or doing pushups and sit ups.

• **Convenience:** Find a gym that’s on your way home from work or get a piece of equipment for your home, work out at lunch or get up a half hour earlier in the morning to take that brisk walk. Making it convenient to exercise will ensure it’s easier for you to keep at it.

• **Commitment:** Remember why you’re exercising. Whether it’s to get healthy, prevent disease or feel better about yourself, remaining focused on what’s inspired you to exercise in the first place will help keep you focused and going.

And finally, while it’s recommended the average person get 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week, Gallagher encourages beginners to start slow and celebrate each success along the way.

“Take it slow in the beginning and don’t expect overnight results. Commit to exercising a few days a week for 30 minutes. As that gets easier to do, add a fourth day and continue to build from there,” said Gallagher. “And pat yourself on the back when you’ve successfully completed a week’s worth of exercise or maybe you’ve added a few minutes to each walk. Always take the time to recognize how far you’ve come.”

Find out more about cardiovascular health and prevention programs on page 8.

“Getting up and getting moving can be hard…

But all you need to do is put one foot in front of the other and just move. And the benefits of exercise aren’t just physical. There is no question that exercise makes you feel closer to your best self, and that’s a wonderful feeling that will have a positive impact on all parts of your life.”

Angie Gallagher

For more information, visit samhealth.org/SHVI
Woman gets new life after heart rhythm procedure

“She’s spent my entire life trying not to trigger an attack. Just walking too much or even bending over to do some gardening could cause an attack. It controlled my life. I wasn’t really living.”

Story on front cover

...also inside

» Local woman finally gets relief from painful varicose veins
» SHS, OSU team up to provide heart screenings to student athletes
» The skinny on fat and nutrition myths & mysteries