

## Luncheon promotes women's heart health

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The number one cause of death in women is not breast cancer. According to Sybil Calhoun, cardiovascular manager at Bedford Memorial Hospital, it's heart attack. Calhoun said that heart attacks kill 500,000 women every year.

This is why Bedford Memorial Hospital began holding an annual women's wellness luncheon each year. This will be the fifth year it has done this.

Calhoun said that awareness is important because the onset of a heart attack in a woman can be different. Instead of the classic symptoms of chest pain, it may feel like indigestion. Her back may hurt in the area of her shoulders, or she can have pain in her jaw on one side.

Calhoun said that they are seeing heart attacks happening now at younger ages — people in their late 30s. She said that they believe this is due to a generation of people who eat more fast food, and live a life that features a low level of exercise and a high level of

stress. These younger heart attack victims also have parents who had heart attacks, but their parents didn't experience this until they were in their 60s.

The luncheons promote awareness. They also provide information.

"Each year we have a luncheon, people learn something new," she said. "It's a time to go and learn about something to take care of ourselves."

Each year, the luncheon features a speaker who approaches the subject from a different angle. This year's speaker, Dr. Jeannie Garber, will talk about dealing with stress through humor. Dr. Garber teaches at the Jefferson College of Health Sciences in Roanoke. Calhoun said that this topic was chosen in response to the requests women, who attended last year's luncheon, made on the surveys they filled out at the end of the event.

"We really take those to heart," Calhoun said of the surveys.

Stress is a factor in heart attacks. According to Calhoun, stress causes the body to release a hormone that makes artery walls stickier. This makes fat more likely to stick

to them and build up a blockage. Calhoun said that a lot of women are experiencing stress because women tend to be the primary caregivers in their families and are sandwiched between caring for children and caring for aging parents, with job responsibilities added on top.

The lunch, itself, is also educational.

"We try to provide a tasty, heart healthy lunch," said Calhoun.

This includes the recipes for the food the caterer served, giving women ideas of what they can do at home.

Other information is available on the back of the luncheon's program and at a booth that will be set up. The program will list heart facts and information on low-fat diets and stress management will be available at the booth.

The luncheon will be held at the Bedford Welcome Center from 11:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. on Feb. 5 and ladies planning to attend are urged to register as soon as possible because seating is limited to 60. Call Carilion Direct at (540) 266-6000 to reserve a seat.

Calhoun asked that ladies attending wear red.





This will be the fifth year that Bedford Memorial Hospital will hold its women's wellness luncheon.