

Heartaware

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Expertise in Matters of the Heart

Heart disease remains the leading cause of illness-related deaths in the United States and coronary artery disease accounts for more than a million heart attacks annually. Symptoms and illness do not appear until adulthood, but heart disease has its roots in childhood. Heart disease occurs due to the effects of long-term risks including high cholesterol, high blood pressure, tobacco use, and family history. 2004-2005 Heartaware statistics suggest that among local elementary school-age children, approximately 3 of every 10 children have borderline or high cholesterol and 1 of every 4 children have two or more heart-health risk factors.

Heartaware (formally known as C-SHOP) began in 1992 providing heart-health education and screening to 5th and 10th grades. In 2002, the Heartaware program switched to 4th and 10th grades to complement local school district curriculum standards. Two programming options are available. Schools may choose a school site-based option or the Discovery Science Center – Thoracic Park field trip option. Both programming options include cardiovascular health education and screening.



Heartaware is offered to all 4th and 10th graders in Northern Colorado by Heart Center of the Rockies, affiliated with Poudre Valley Health System, and is provided as a free service through funding by the Poudre Valley Hospital Foundation. Since the program's inception, Heartaware has served approximately 96% of local schools with 254 school visits, reaching more than 19,000 students.

The Heartaware program education component provides free classroom materials emphasizing the importance of healthful diet, regular exercise, and avoidance of all tobacco. The education component is enhanced with a field trip to "Thoracic Park" at the Discovery Science

Center. Together, Heartaware and the Thoracic Park exhibit allow an exciting hands-on experience and address school standards in health-related science, math, and literacy.

The Heartaware screening component includes measures of blood pressure, body mass index (BMI) using height and weight, and cholesterol through a non-fasting, finger-stick method. The screening is voluntary and requires parent/guardian permission. These measures along with a family heart-health survey screen children who may be at risk for future heart disease. Heartaware helps children and their families learn lifestyle enhancements that may prevent future heart disease.