

February Goals

Nutrition: View the Eating Out Class on your wellness portal and take the quiz.

Fitness: Track the number of steps you take a day or how many days a week you walk for 30 minutes or more.

Preventive: Go to My Health Stats on your wellness portal and add your height and weight (if not already there). Add any other health numbers you know.

Lifestyle: Choose 1 healthy lifestyle activity to add and track on your wellness portal.

Completely Well

February 2014



Insurance Agency



February is American Heart Month. This month's newsletter features articles on heart health along with Ask the Trainer and Less Is More: Fitness Equipment for the Home

Nutrition

Eating Out the Heart Healthy Way

Though eating at home is usually the healthier option, eating out can be an enjoyable way to spend time with friends and family and doesn't have to ruin your diet. Following some simple tips can help you understand how to decipher the menu and choose the best meal for your health.

Almost all restaurants offer healthy options. Begin by finding out what soups are offered. Choosing a broth-based soup can provide you with vegetables and help control your hunger. If no broth-based soup is available, consider a small salad, but make sure to ask for dressing "on the side." Then you can try the "fork trick." Rather than pouring the dressing over the salad, dip your fork into the dressing and then into your salad. You will eat much less dressing (which is often loaded with fat) by doing this.

When ordering, avoid anything fried, breaded, or includes a cream sauce. Order broiled or grilled lean protein and plenty of vegetables. Plan your portions in advance, and ask for a to-go container to pack the extra food before you start eating. Don't forget that the breadbasket, condiments, and sauces are additional calories and, sometimes, fat. If eating out is a special occasion, you can enjoy a small portion of your favorite food. Remember that it is how you eat over the whole day, the whole week, the whole month that determines the health of your diet. Enjoying a reasonable portion of your favorite food on a special occasion can actually help you avoid binging later.

Eating at home can save you well over 1000 calories. It also helps you control the fat, salt, and sugar in your diet. But when you do eat out, enjoy the healthier choices!

Produce of the Month Dried Fruits



Try This: Add a small amount of dried fruit to your favorite muffin or bread recipe. Add dried fruit to salads, rice dishes, or sauces. For an easy side dish, cook quinoa and set aside. Add boiling water to some dried fruit (apricots or raisins work well). Allow the fruit to “plump up.” Drain the boiling water and add the dried fruit to the quinoa. Add chopped purple onion, salt, pepper, and any other chopped nuts, seeds, or vegetables you would like!

The departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services state that you should eat a minimum of 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. And while fresh whole fruits and vegetables is always best, including some dried fruit is a good way to add variety, satisfy a sweet tooth, and enjoy the nutrients found in the whole fruit.

The Basics: Dried fruit is healthiest without added sugar. Dried cranberries and pineapple are more likely to have added sugar, so read the label. Dried bananas are often fried, so – again – read the label carefully. Raisins (dried grapes) and prunes (dried plums) are the most common dried fruits, but you can find dried apples, apricots, and cherries in most grocery stores. Because the water has been removed, dried fruit will be sweeter than whole fruit. There are more calories per cup for dried fruit as well. But that doesn't have to stop you from enjoying it. Just choose a ¼ cup as a serving size. You can mix it with grains or nuts for a snack or add it to a recipe.

The Facts: Though it varies, the average number of calories in ¼ cup of dried fruit is between 75-125. Dried fruit is a good source of fiber, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals.

Eating Tips for Heart Health

- ✓ Base the majority of your diet on fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- ✓ Limit added fat, salt, and sugar.
- ✓ Limit alcohol intake.
- ✓ Limit red meat.
- ✓ Limit high fat animal products – full fat dairy and meats that are higher in fat.
- ✓ Watch your portion size.
- ✓ Avoid processed foods, especially those that contain trans fats.



Preventive

Heart Health Basics

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heart disease

- is the leading cause of death for men and women,
- costs the United States almost \$109 billion dollars a year in healthcare costs, prescriptions, and lost workplace productivity.
- and is responsible for approximately one quarter of all deaths every year.

According to the World Health Organization, most heart disease can be prevented through lifestyle changes and addressing risk factors – quitting smoking, eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, getting regular exercise, controlling blood pressure, and controlling cholesterol.

According to the American Heart Association, knowing your numbers will help you know your risk. The following are key numbers to be at a reduced risk for heart disease:

- Cholesterol – total less than 200 mg/dL, LDL less than 160 mg/dL, and HDL 50 mg/dL or higher
- Blood Pressure – less than 120/80.
- BMI – less than 25
- Triglycerides – less than 150 mg/dL
- waist measurement – women (35 inches or less), men (40 inches or less)

It's clear that we can make meaningful changes to improve our health and reduce our risk of heart disease. For those who are already diagnosed with heart disease, these lifestyle changes and risk management choices are even more critical. Commit to making changes this year to reduce your risk of heart disease and heart attack. Limit fat and salt in your diet. Increase fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Quit using tobacco. Increase your daily activity. See your medical professional to identify your specific risk for heart disease. And know your numbers. Keeping track of your blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, and waist measurement can help you monitor your risk for heart disease. Know the symptoms of a heart attack, and call 911 immediately if you experience any of the following:

chest pain, shortness of breath, pain in the jaw and/or down the arm, nausea, cold sweat, and increased anxiety.

Heart Healthy Behaviors

We know that diet and exercise are important to heart health, but there are other things you can do to help improve your overall health and reduce your risk for heart disease.

Sleep:

It has long been established that sleep is important for health, but new research links heart disease risk to getting too little sleep. According to Sleep Medicine (published online on October 28, 2013), people who got an average of less than 6 hours of sleep a night had an increased risk for heart disease. This risk is because those who did not get enough sleep were more likely to be obese, have diabetes, have high blood pressure, and have high cholesterol – all known risk factors for heart disease. Establishing a regular sleep routine can help create a more restful environment and, ultimately, better sleep. If you struggle with getting enough sleep, discuss with your doctor what else you can try and if you might need any further screenings (including sleep apnea).

Stress Reduction:

Chronic stress – stress that continues over a long period of time and goes unresolved – is also linked to an increased risk of heart disease. This may be because the hormones that are released during stress can elevate blood pressure and may also change the way that blood clots. It may also be that chronic stress can result in behaviors that increase the risk of heart disease: smoking, drinking, overeating, and not sleeping. Whatever the reason, not

addressing chronic stress can result in both physical and emotional problems. Decide what you can and can't change about your stressful situation. Write it down. Get regular exercise to help manage your stress. Eat a healthy diet and find time to relax – both by yourself and with friends/family. Journaling and meditation are also useful stress reduction tools. If the stress is still too much, consider seeing a mental health professional, pastor, or other professional who might help you work through your stressful situation.

Spend Time with Friends/Family:

We know that being lonely can be hard, but it is also a risk for heart disease. Loneliness is type of stress, one that can have an effect on the blood vessels, causing high blood pressure. A study out of Sweden found that loneliness had a greater impact on the mortality rate of patients who had coronary bypass surgery than depression or anger. Additionally, it has been found that it is the feeling of loneliness that is important – not whether someone is actually alone or not. If you are feeling lonely, don't wait for others to reach out to you – connect in person, by phone, or even by Facebook. If your loneliness persists – even when in the company of friends and family – consider talking with a medical professional about it. Finding a therapist can help you work through your loneliness.

The heart is both complex and amazing. Do what you can to reduce your risk for heart disease and live well.

Being able to exercise at home can save hundreds of dollars every year in gym memberships. Here is a list of some affordable equipment that can be a great asset to your home gym and ways to use them. **Just remember to consult your doctor or medical professional before you start any new workout program.**

Free Weights:

Free weights are a great way to pump up your workout and be very effective. They are easy to store in a closet or under the couch when using them at home. You can do your basic bicep curls and a tricep extension as well as arm raises to work your shoulders. These can also be held in each hand to increase resistance for squats and lunges. Free weights range from \$1.50 for a light neoprene dumbbell to \$300 for an adjustable weight set. Most of us are very happy with the good old cast iron which ranges from \$10 - \$42 dollars depending on how much weight you need.

Resistance Bands:

These are easy and cheap additions to your gym. They can be used similar to free weights. Stand in the middle of the band and hold the ends, one in each hand. Try this position for a bicep curl, tricep extension, or bent over row. Use the bands as you do squats. These are wonderful travel buddies to keep you in your routine while on the road as well. You can find them in varying levels of resistance for about \$15.

Medicine Ball:

Medicine Balls are great for core strength. Starting at around \$25, medicine balls are weighted balls (weight can vary) and generally have a 14-inch diameter. You can bounce them off an exterior wall (or concrete basement or garage wall) to practice coordination while also working your core, arms, and legs. Try using them with a friend, sitting back to back and passing the ball to the right and then the left.

Exercise/Balance Ball:

Exercise or balance balls – a ball that is filled with air and is designed to sit on - come in all shapes and sizes and range from \$15-\$40 dollars. Primarily these balls work your core muscles by simply sitting on the ball and doing crunches. By doing some research and talking to a personal trainer you can learn dozens of fun and simple exercises that incorporate the ball and use more muscles.

Step Bench:

Step Benches cost around \$50 but can be used so many different ways that they are worth the investment. You can use them for lunges or step up's for cardio. You can use them to make your basic push up more difficult and even for abdominal work. Step benches are a great addition to your home gym and feel free to get creative with this one.

No matter what you decide to purchase for your home gym, make sure you do a bit of research to ensure you are getting the best deal and that you will use the piece often. Have fun and stay fit!

-Marie McFadden, CHES



Ask the Trainer Understanding Trigger Point Therapy

Question: I run almost everyday and strength train a few days a week. I've been hearing a lot about self-myofascial release the last few months and not exactly sure what it is. What is it and would it be beneficial for me to incorporate in my workouts?

Answer: Self-Myofascial Release is a type of trigger point therapy and it would help you in your workouts and in everyday life. I was introduced to this technique a year ago and it has helped me become more flexible and less sore after my workouts.

Trigger point therapy (TPT) is a bodywork technique that

involves the application of pressure to tender muscle tissue in order to relieve pain and dysfunction in other parts of the body. It may also be called myofascial (*myo* meaning muscle, *fascial* meaning connective tissue) trigger point therapy.

Benefits of TPT consist of eliminating or decreasing pain, increasing range of motion, flexibility and strength. It can improve sleep, increase endurance, and improve quality of life and fitness level along with many other things. We shorten our muscle fibers almost everyday with the activities we do, especially if we work out a lot. Shortening your muscles fibers can lead to tight muscles, back pain and many other issues. Performing self-myofascial release techniques can help you not only feel

better but also move and perform better! I use it everyday with my clients and they not only love it, but they can feel a huge difference when we incorporate this into our workouts.

There are many different ways to perform TPT. You can use a foam roller or even a tennis ball. Use the roller/ball to apply pressure to your tight muscles or sore spot, including the surrounding area. Do this either by placing your body weight on it or using your hands to apply pressure. Think of it as a massage. Apply enough pressure – but stop if you feel pain. “Massage the area” for 30 -90 seconds at a time. Consider working with a personal trainer or physical therapist if you need more instruction.

Erin M. Long, B.S., NSCA-CPT

Want to know more?

Contact TCU Insurance Agency for more information on wellness programs and how they can help reduce healthcare costs and improve employee wellness.

Brian Liechty RHU, REBC

120 E Washington St

Plymouth IN 46563

800-936-5373

bliechty@tcuinsurance.com



Insurance Agency