



Insurance Agency

Preventive

American Heart Month

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 for a reduced risk for heart disease:

- Cholesterol – total less than 200 mg/dL, LDL less than 160 mg/dL, and HDL 40 mg/dL or higher.
- Blood Pressure – less than 120/80.
- A1C – less than 6.
- 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.

In this Issue: One Pot Meals, American Heart Month, Winter Skin Care, The Heart is a Muscle, Ask the Trainer: The New Macro Diet, and Social Support.



Winter Skin Care

We know to protect our skin from the sun in the summer, but the winter also requires special skin protection. Here are some things to consider:

- **Sunscreen** – Even in the winter, your skin still needs protection from the sun. According to the Mayo Clinic, it is as easy to get sunburned in the winter as it is in the summer. The snow reflects light rays (similar to the way water reflects light rays), increasing the risk of sun damage. Apply sunscreen on all exposed skin when spending time outdoors in summer or winter!
- **Moisturize** – It's possible that you will need to change your moisturizer in the winter. Try a cream base or one with oil if your regular moisturizer isn't working as well.
- **Dry** – Be sure to dry hands well after washing and remove wet socks and gloves as soon as possible. Water on the skin can irritate, causing itchy, painful dry patches.
- **Drink** – Staying hydrated is important for your overall health and may benefit your skin. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, choosing water whenever possible.



Heart Health and Social Support

Lifestyle

Henry Van Dyke, author and clergyman from the early 20th century wrote, "A friend is what the heart needs all the time." While Van Dyke is referring to an emotional need, it is also true that friendship is needed for the health of the heart! Having a strong social support is good for emotional and physical health.

Research reports that a good social support system can help lower blood pressure, even during times of conflict and stress. Lowering blood pressure helps to protect arteries and reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke.

A strong social support can also help individuals follow medical advice and make healthy lifestyle choices. Patients with good support are more likely to keep doctor's appointments, take prescribed medications, and keep track of important health data, such as weight, blood pressure, blood sugars, and waist size. Additionally, friends and family can help individuals make good

lifestyle choices that are heart healthy: eating a healthier diet and getting regular exercise. However, it's important to note that some friends and family can have the opposite effect, encouraging less healthy behaviors. If this is the case, just changing when and where one socializes can help. For example, rather than going out to dinner with someone who might encourage ordering fried appetizers, choose to go out for coffee. Skipping a late night outing for a morning walk is another good idea. Making healthy changes can be hard, and having friends and family who are supportive can make it much easier.

Heart health is critical to day to day life, and a healthy lifestyle is critical to heart health. It doesn't matter if the support system is a large group or one good friend. Having someone who supports healthy behaviors can make all the difference.

Did You Know? Simple Steps to Combat Heart Disease *by Robb Seaton*

Heart disease is the number one killer of male lowland gorillas in North American zoos. And when I say "male lowland gorillas," I'm not taking a jab at the (much maligned) American husband. I'm talking about 6 foot tall, 500 pound, silverback apes.

The problem? The gorillas have been fed high-starch, high-sugar foods by the bucketful. (Remind you of anything? You didn't have a donut for breakfast, did you?) But don't worry too much -- zoos have started to do something about it. At Cleveland's Metropark Zoo, the gorillas switched to an all vegetable, foraging-heavy diet and, I'm happy to report, dropped nearly 65 pounds each.

"Foraging-heavy" here means that they have to work for their food. They don't hunt, exactly -- they're less hunter-gatherer and more plain gatherer-gatherer. The gist, then, is that 1) apes were dying of heart attacks in droves, until 2) they started getting vegetables and regular exercise.

Sound familiar?

If this strikes you as reminiscent of the standard American plight, it ought to. Heart disease is the leading cause of death not only in the United States, but in the entire world. 1 in 4 American deaths are due to heart disease. It's a bigger problem than AIDs and cancer combined.

The solutions for enlightened humans -- like you and I, gentle reader -- are the same as they were for those apes.

1. Exercise.
2. Eat your broccoli.
3. Don't smoke.

In a perverted sense, the apes have it easier. Their cages and handlers ensure that they're not downing donuts or worse for breakfast. We have to rely on self-control instead of iron bars and zookeepers. (Okay, okay, maybe a watchful spouse isn't too different from a zookeeper.)

But if monkeys can do it, can't we?



Nutrition

Produce of the Month: Bananas

If you think bananas are just for your morning cereal, you could be missing out on a delicious addition to any meal and snack time. With a distinctive flavor, bananas are a high fiber, potassium rich food, known to be heart healthy and easy on the digestive system.

The Basics: Most bananas are the sweet variety- the traditional yellow skinned version in every grocery store. There are also plantain bananas which are starchier and are cooked and served as a vegetable. Bananas are picked while still green and continue to ripen. Choose bananas that are not bruised or have noticeable soft spots. Select greener bananas if you plan on using them later in the week. If you plan on eating the banana within the next day or so, choose one with a bright yellow color. Store bananas at room temperature. Putting a banana in the refrigerator will stop it from ripening. If you choose to refrigerate your bananas, know that the skin will turn brown but it doesn't affect the fruit. It is best to peel and prepare the bananas just before eating since the banana will turn slightly brown and soften the longer it is exposed to the air.

Try This: Add banana to your yogurt or make an almond butter and banana sandwich on whole wheat bread for a delicious lunch. Ripe bananas, mashed with a fork, can be a substitute for oil in many baking recipes. For a frozen treat: melt chocolate chips with a little butter (4 T to a 32 ounce bag). Dip whole bananas in the chocolate and freeze!

The Facts: A medium banana has about 100 calories, and is a good source of fiber, vitamin B6, vitamin C and potassium.

Keeping it Simple and Healthy with One Pot Meals

Crock pot, Dutch oven, large skillet – it doesn't matter which you use, cooking your meal in one pot is both a great time saver and makes for an easier clean up. Here are some ideas for simple one-pot meals that are good for you.

Slow Cooker Chicken – For many, using the slow cooker (or crock pot) leads to mushy, overcooked food. A good way to avoid this is to choose slower cooking foods. One example is a whole chicken. Prepare the chicken by removing any packaged innards and rinsing the chicken. Place the whole chicken in the crock-pot. (You may want to spray the pot with a non-stick spray first to make clean up easier.) Season the chicken, using strong flavors such as garlic cloves, chunks of ginger, oregano, salt and pepper. Add large chunks of carrots, potatoes or other root vegetables and a small amount of water (1/2 cup or so). Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours.

Dutch Oven Pork Loin – Pork loin is a very lean piece of meat that cooks quickly. Season the pork loin with salt and pepper and put into your Dutch oven with 1 cup of onion and a little olive or canola oil. Cook over medium heat until the pork has browned. Add 2 large sliced apples (Granny Smith or another tart apple), and 2 cups of cranberry sauce (fresh is best). Add 1 Tablespoon Worcestershire sauce, 1 Tablespoon Apple cider vinegar and 2 Tablespoons of brown sugar. Mix thoroughly and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and cover. Simmer for 40 minutes or so, until the pork is tender. Serve over leftover noodles or brown rice if you desire.

Skillet Turkey with Vegetables – In an oven safe skillet, brown a boneless turkey breast on medium high heat. Add sliced onions, celery, carrots and mushrooms; drizzle with a little olive oil and add salt and pepper. Place in 475 degree oven for 20-25 minutes, making sure the turkey registers 160 degrees F.

White Bean Crock Pot Chili - Combine 1 cup chopped onion, 1 cup bell pepper, 1 ½ tablespoons oregano, 4-6 garlic cloves, and cilantro to taste in a food processor. Pulse until somewhat smooth. In a pan, cook for 5-8 minutes the mixture from the food processor with 1 tablespoon of cumin, 2 tablespoons tomato paste, salt and pepper to taste. Add the mixture to the slow cooker along with another cup of onion and bell pepper, 4 ½ cups of vegetable broth, can of pureed tomatoes, and can of diced tomatoes. Stir well, then add 1 package of dried white beans. Cook on low for 8 hours.



Fitness

The Heart is a Muscle

We know it's important to exercise. We feel better, look better, and improve our health. But we don't often think about the heart as a muscle, and the impact that exercise has on it. We know that if we exercise our bicep, we see growth and definition. But what happens when we exercise the heart?

Like all muscles, the heart is strengthened through exercise. The way we exercise the heart is through aerobic exercise. This is exercise that raises heart rate and increases the intake of oxygen. We exercise aerobically when we walk at a brisk pace, swim, jog, cycle, dance, jump rope, or any exercise that causes the heart rate to increase. When the heart becomes stronger, it works more efficiently, pumping more blood with each beat. Research has shown that those who exercise aerobically have lower risks for heart disease than those who don't. A strong heart also has a lower resting heart rate.

The benefits extend beyond strengthening the heart. Aerobic exercise also lowers cholesterol, reduces blood sugars, decreases triglycerides, and decreases the risk for depression. Clearly, exercising the heart is important for our health and our quality of life.

Talk to your doctor before beginning an exercise program or increasing intensity of an exercise program.

Ask the Trainer by Erin Long, B.S., NSCA-CPT

Q: Hi, Erin. Lately I've been hearing a lot about The Marco Diet. I was wondering what that was and if you think it's a good choice.

~Amanda K

A: Hi, Amanda. Thanks for the question. I am very familiar with "The Marco Diet," as my last nutrition certification was all about this program. I do like this program, but it's not for everyone. I don't like to think of it as a diet though; it's just a different way of fueling your body. What this program does is base your caloric intake on your body type. There are three different body types: ectomorph, mesomorph and endomorph. Below are general characterizations of each body type.

Ectomorphs: thin individuals with smaller bone structures and thinner limbs. Many people think of a long distance runner or endurance athlete when it comes to this body type. This body type usually has a fast metabolic rate and high carb tolerance. These individuals usually take in about 55% carbs, 25% protein and 20% fat in their nutrient intake. So in common terms think higher carb, lower fat.

Mesomorphs: medium sized bone and athletic body. Many people associate explosive athletes like football running backs and an outside hitter in volleyball to this body type. This type usually does best with a mixed nutrient intake such as 40% carbs, 30% protein and 30% fat. They need more of a balance with their nutrients rather than one higher or lower than the other.

Endomorphs: larger bone structure with higher amounts of total body mass and fat mass. Think of a

Continued next page

Ask the Trainer, continued...

football lineman or power lifter as examples of endomorphs. Where the ectomorphs tend to burn off excess calories with near constant movement, excess calories in endomorphs do not seem to cause that same increase in expenditure. This means that excess calories are more likely to be stored as fat. This body type typically has a lower carbohydrate tolerance. Endomorphs should intake around 25% carbs, 35% protein and 40% fat. This time think higher fats and protein and lower carbs.

You'll notice that all three of these body types eat around 30-35% protein. Most Americans do get this amount of protein, and it is important to get that when following this model and when working out. Every body is different, so sometime we need to fuel our bodies differently. That's why I like this model as it takes your body type into consideration. One of the other things I like about this is that some people are a mixture of two body types. You could be a mesomorph with endomorph tendencies and this can take it to a different level. I would always recommend consulting with a professional before trying anything like this and if you are under a doctor's care consult with them as well. There is a lot more that goes into this besides what I've mentioned but this is a great overview to give you the basic information.

However, does this model work for everyone? Of course not, but it has helped many of my clients lose weight and become healthier

Want to know more?

Contact Teachers Credit Union for information on wellness programs. We can help you reduce healthcare costs and improve employee well being.



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