

# COMPLETELY WELL

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Insurance Agency



## Heart Health

At the end of 2016, we were again reminded that heart disease is the number one killer for women as well as for men with the sudden death of actress Carrie Fisher. It's a fact. Heart disease kills more women than all cancers combined. Fact. Ninety percent of women have at least one risk factor for developing heart disease. Women need to learn their risks for cardiovascular disease, the symptoms that are common to women and

what they can do to be heart healthy. Risk factors for heart disease in women and men include family history, high blood pressure, diabetes, being overweight or obese, smoking, lack of exercise and high cholesterol. Women are also at an increased risk for heart disease as they get older, especially post-menopausal or post-hysterectomy if the ovaries are removed. Estrogen seems to protect the heart, and estrogen drops after menopause or removal of the ovaries. Any prior heart attack or stroke also puts women at an increased risk.

While many men report heart symptoms as being a "crushing pressure" in the chest or pain that radiates down the left arm or up to the jaw, women's symptoms are often different. Women experience fatigue, shortness of breath, back pain, nausea, stomach pain, pain in the shoulders or a "heartburn" feeling in the chest. Other possible symptoms include breaking out in a cold sweat and an overwhelming feeling of anxiety. Any combination of these symptoms - whether traditionally men's or women's symptoms - is a reason to seek immediate medical attention. Even mild chest pain without other symptoms requires a call to your doctor.

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# Disconnect to Reconnect

Technology has done so much to improve our day to day lives. It keeps our calendars synced, our families connected, and provides us with instant information. However, the constant connection has a price. Too much technology is associated with a sedentary lifestyle, less satisfaction in our relationships, and an increased risk for depression. How does something that connects us leave us so disconnected? We've all seen it. Perhaps even lived it. Out to dinner with family or friends and at least one person interrupts the conversation to look at a phone. Significant others who go without talking, plugged into social media or their own Netflix profile. And what about social media? Feeling pressure to live a life that is post-worthy is stressful. It's clear that we need to disconnect, and here are a couple benefits to consider.

- A study published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* reported that a break from technology at night is important for stress reduction. People need time away from work and work issues to recharge and not staying connected to colleagues and work improves energy and mental health.
- Disconnecting from electronics at night can lead to better sleep. Both the light from phones and tablets and the constant stimulation makes falling asleep difficult and can lead to poorer sleep quality.
- *Time* magazine reported a study out of the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business that found that cell phone use made people less likely to help others; the participants didn't participate in volunteer opportunities or complete activities for charity as often as those who did not use a cell phone more often. Disconnecting may help us live a kinder life.

To be clear, there is little downside to disconnecting on a regular basis. Emails, texts, headlines, and posts will be there when it's time to connect again. And you may find that limiting your screen time helps reduce stress, improve sleep, and enhance your life.



## Produce of the Month

# Zucchini

Zucchini, a type of summer squash, is still available fresh and in your grocer's freezer section. Zucchini makes a great main course, side dish, or even a healthy and delicious ingredient in a dessert. A good source of fiber, potassium, folate, and vitamin C, zucchini is low in calories and filled with antioxidants.

**The Facts:** One cup of zucchini is only 40 calories.

**The Basics:** Medium sized zucchini tend to be sweeter and less fibrous. Look for zucchini that doesn't have blemishes or any obvious cuts, splits, or marks and store in the refrigerator until ready to use. When ready, wash gently and cut off the stem prior to preparing. Zucchini is delicious grilled, sautéed, roasted, or steamed. Use zucchini to make homemade noodles and top with your favorite tomato sauce or pesto.

**Try This:** Zucchini can be stuffed with a number of ingredients, and are a great dinner option. For an Italian take on stuffed zucchini, brown ground beef, chicken, or turkey and mix with tomato sauce, bread crumbs (look for gluten free options), garlic, Parmesan cheese, and Italian seasonings. Scoop out the flesh of the zucchini sliced lengthwise. Mix the zucchini flesh with the meat mixture and fill the zucchini shells with premade stuffing. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. You can also make zucchini bread for a great breakfast option. For a healthy version, find a recipe that includes whole grain or gluten flour and cut the amount of recommended sugar in half. With the natural sweetness of the pureed zucchini, you won't even notice how healthy you are eating.

## Staying Active in Cold Weather

Baby, it's cold outside! But that doesn't mean that you can't continue working out! Of course, you can head to the gym or workout at home. But unless the weather is dangerous (think subzero wind chills), there are ways to enjoy exercise outside. Don't let winter stop you from exercising. Keep moving - indoors or outdoors.

- Be safe. Avoid excess cold or exercising during weather events that will make it hard for others to see you. Working out in the cold puts an additional strain on your heart and lungs, so be sure that it is safe for you to do so. Discuss this with your doctor.
- Dress in layers, with the closest layer to your skin one that draws sweat away from your body.
- Don't neglect your extremities, wearing gloves and heavy socks as needed. You may need a different shoe for winter workouts, one that can handle snow and ice on the ground and can accommodate a thicker sock. Don't forget a hat and gloves.
- Though you may not feel like you need water, you do! Drink enough water before and during your workout.
- If you are heading out at night, wear light colored clothing and reflective gear. If you walk, run, or ride your bike late at night, be sure to go with a partner or vary your route.



## Heart Health *continued from page 1.*

There are things that can be done to reduce the risk of heart disease. Smoking is one of the leading causes for heart disease, and quitting smoking will reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease and other serious conditions. Losing weight is important as well. Eating well and exercising to lose weight can improve cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Recent research has shown that eating fruits and vegetables can also reduce your risk of heart disease. For those who have type 2 diabetes, losing weight and exercising can often get the disease under control as well, which is another way to protect the heart. Additionally, the heart doesn't have to "overwork" when a healthy weight is maintained. Stress is a known factor in heart disease. Reducing stress through exercise and meditation can help. See your doctor regularly to monitor any possible risk factors, and if you believe you are having a heart related problem, make sure that your doctor checks you out completely and runs any necessary tests. Pay attention to the changes in your body, and take control of your health by making sure that your doctor checks these out completely.

Women's heart health is a serious issue. Make a healthy choice today that reduces your risk for cardiovascular disease. Put down the cigarettes. Take a walk. Skip the fried food. Get plenty of healthy fats. Limit sweet food and drinks. Women need to do whatever it takes to protect their health for their own longevity and happiness.

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## Meal Planning for Success

Odds are that most of us made “eating right” a New Year’s Resolution. And odds are that it has been more difficult than expected! Eating well can be hard to do: eating out, going to parties, grabbing a quick bite during a busy day, all can create situations where healthy eating is a challenge! But eating well can be easier with a plan in place. Planning meals and snacks can make the day to day food choices healthier.

If meal planning is new to you, starting with a dinner plan may make the most sense. Not having a plan - and the ingredients we may need - can lead to more take-out dinners, traditionally high in fat, sodium and calories. Having a weekly plan, or menu, can save you calories and money! Take-out dinners cost more than a home cooked meal, and those who have a weekly menu tend not to waste as much food or overbuy on a whim.

The first thing you should do is have a clear understanding of your calendar and lifestyle. You may work late hours or have a busy family with many activities. Once you understand your schedule for the week, take some time to look through the ads for your local grocery store. Taking a little time each week to check out the sales can reduce your family’s grocery bill. Pay special attention to sales on meat and poultry, and include in your menu the healthy, lean cuts of meat that may be available.

(Don’t forget to buy extra when you can to stock up your freezer!) For vegetarians, making sure that you include a variety of vegetables and whole grains is important and can help you better utilize sale items as well. Eliminating as many processed foods as possible is always a good idea.

Create a dinner menu that focuses on lean meat, fatty fish, or other healthy protein, green vegetable, starchy vegetable or whole grains, and healthy fats. Choose foods that are low in sugar and sodium and high in fiber. To do so, consider the advice of the National Cancer Institute, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention: eat plenty of fruits and vegetables daily! A dinner that has a lot of green leafy vegetables will be naturally low-calorie and contain plenty of healthy fiber. Menu planning can make managing a chronic condition easier as well. If you need a meal for someone with diabetes or high blood pressure, planning ahead helps you create a nutritious meal that meets your nutrition needs. Write out your weekly meal plan and create a grocery list based on what you have decided.

Consider prepackaging your snacks on the weekend or even the night before. Having a bag that includes a fruit, some nuts, and some whole grain crackers can keep you from a vending machine run. If eating out, go online to check out the menu ahead of time or use one of several nutrition apps to help you make a healthy choice. Check for meals that are broiled or grilled, and watch out for sauces or marinades with added sugar and sodium. You can also ask that half your meal be packed to go when you order.

A little planning can make a real difference in your diet. You will find that a little work will save you money and having you eating better in no time.





# Ask the Trainer

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

**Q:** Hello Erin! I am trying to lose weight (and have been for years). I've tried numerous diets and nothing seems to stick. I lose weight and then it creeps back. Is there a diet you recommend that will help me keep the weight off? Thanks in advance! -Cynthia, 56

**A:** Hello Cynthia! Thank you for reaching out. I wish I had the magic answer to solve your problem as you are not alone. Unfortunately, there is no magic "diet" that I have found that really works. To me a "diet" is simply the way you choose to eat. And over the last 50+ years the way we eat as a society has changed dramatically. We no longer eat real whole foods. Most packaged and convenience foods have been processed with added sugars, artificial flavorings, and preservatives, lowering their nutrition value. The lack of accessible nutritious foods combined with all those crazy eating plans out there and you've got an even bigger problem. Most of these fad diets do not yield results and can actually be dangerous. I have known so many people who have yo-yo dieted over years and they lose weight, only to gain it back. This never ending cycle can lead to unhealthy eating patterns and cause people to become discouraged as they fail to see results.

When it comes to losing weight, what works will be different for everyone. Even so, it may be simpler than you think. Let me start by saying you should focus on getting healthier rather than losing weight. By becoming healthier, most likely you will lose weight. So here's what I recommend with my clients.

First, I encourage every one of my clients to record what they are eating and drinking and bring me that journal. We then sit down and take a long look at their eating patterns. In today's fast passed society many people rely on fast and processed foods because they are quick, easy and convenient. Who has time to sit down and cook anymore? That is where planning and preparation come in. Yes, I won't lie, it will be more time consuming but if you are serious about becoming healthy it takes time. It won't happen overnight but nothing worth having usually does. By taking a closer look how someone is fueling their body, I can usually find changes people can make to start improving their health right away.

The first step is usually getting rid of the fast and processed foods. The more natural you eat the better. We need healthy proteins, fats, and carbohydrates to fuel our bodies and every *body* will have different needs.

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## Ask the Trainer *continued from page 5.*

In most cases, people aren't drinking enough water either. That is another focus area I have people start with and you would be amazed at how much better people start to feel when hydrated and this can accelerate your weight loss efforts. And, of course, it never hurts to get moving. Remember, our bodies were made to move not sit at a desk or in a vehicle for 8+ hours a week.

So when it comes to eating well, keep it simple and get back to the basics by eating vegetables, fruits, lean meats, good fats, and whole grains. You will not only feel better, you will probably lose a few pounds as well. (Again, it most likely will come down to eating these things in the proper proportion. I would recommend talking to a professional for recommendations based on your individual needs.)

Now don't get me wrong, I have worked with people who get exercise, eat amazing healthy foods and still can't lose weight. In those cases, there may be an underlying health issue so I am not saying it will work for everyone. However, most people can benefit their wellbeing just by making better choices at each meal. It doesn't mean you can never have something that isn't good for you again but learning moderation is key. In fact, stepping away from processed or sugary foods for a bit and focusing on making healthy food choices often helps you learn how to enjoy those foods in moderation and eat a balanced 'diet'.

I hope this helps you in some way or another. Keep working hard and remember to keep it simple!

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

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