

The Wellness News

Heart Health

Get Moving

Treat your heart like the fine-tuned engine it is by providing your body with good fuel and a maintenance plan that will ensure it continues to run optimally. Your heart's health will likely decline if you are not physically active, so get moving today! It is important to strengthen your heart by doing activities that make it beat faster and harder than usual for at least 10 minutes at a time. Remember, no matter what speed you go, you are still lapping everyone on the couch. Focus on the following areas to keep your heart healthy and functioning at its best.

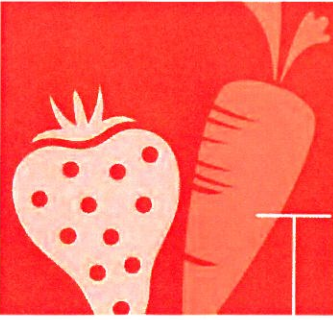
“Bad” Cholesterol and Blood Flow

If fuel lines are blocked, an engine doesn't work. Similarly, if LDL or “bad” cholesterol builds up, it blocks your blood vessels and limits your heart's ability to deliver fuel (oxygen and nutrients) to your organs. Clear those blocked fuel lines by tuning up your nutrition habits. Strive to eat two servings of fruit, three or more servings of vegetables, and soluble fiber (oatmeal, flaxseed, beans and lentils) each day to help clear your blood vessels. Prevent clogged arteries by reducing the amount of saturated fats you eat, including cheeses and red meats. Substitute healthy fats in moderation---good choices include avocado, canola and olive oils, and nut butters. Limiting sugars and refined carbohydrates is also a good idea since these foods increase the amount of fat in your blood.



“Good” Cholesterol and Blood Flow

Your HDL or “good” cholesterol is also important because it helps clear the bad cholesterol from your vessels. To increase your HDL, do cardiovascular activity such as walking, swimming, or anything that will increase your heart rate (and keep it elevated) for at least 10 minutes at a time, and work your way up to at least 30 minutes a day. Healthy oils from fish, avocado, and canola and olive oils will also help improve your numbers.



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Blood Pressure

A headache can act like a “check-engine” light and alert you about possible high blood pressure. Sometimes, however, there are no noticeable indicators of a problem, which is why getting regular blood pressure screenings is so important. High blood pressure can damage the walls of your blood vessels and cause plaque buildup that reduces or prevents blood flow and increases pressure. In more severe cases, the high pressure can result in a burst blood vessel, preventing blood from reaching its destination. Organs and cells that don't receive adequate blood flow may not function properly. Walk vigorously for 30 minutes a day at least four days a week to help lower your blood pressure. Avoid pre-packaged foods, deli meats, and any other products high in sodium to prevent fluid retention and increased blood pressure. Reducing and effectively managing stress are good strategies as well.

Diabetes

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with diabetes or pre-diabetes, take action steps to keep your blood glucose levels stable. If diabetes goes untreated it can lead to nerve damage, vision problems, kidney disease, heart disease, or death. Fortunately, there's a lot you can do to keep diabetes in check and to prevent it. Strength training at an adequate intensity at least twice a week will help your body process glucose more effectively. Talk to a personal trainer, your doctor, or your personal wellness coach to determine the right intensity for you.

Don't forget about cardiovascular activity...any physical activity is a great tool for improving blood glucose control. Also, follow a sensible eating plan and balance your proteins and carbohydrates at every meal to prevent your blood sugar from spiking or lowering too much. You can improve your quality of life a great deal by making healthy lifestyle changes.



Weight

In terms of heart health, excess body weight can lead to high blood pressure, diabetes, and atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). Let's take it down to the basics---to lose weight, there is no magic fix, but you should focus on moving your body, eating a sensible diet, and setting reasonable goals. Losing one to two pounds of body fat a week is ideal. Make it easier on yourself by tracking what you eat and how much physical activity you do.

The physical activity guidelines for weight loss are moderate and/or vigorous activity, five to six days a week for 45-90 minutes each day. Start with an activity that you enjoy and can do on a regular basis week after week. The same goes for your eating habits. Make small changes that you can stick with, and avoid severely limiting any one food group or nutrient. Carbohydrates often get a bad rap, but they are necessary to lose weight. Without carbohydrates, you can't burn fats, so make sure to incorporate about five servings of carbohydrates per day from fruit, vegetables, and/or whole grains. Remember, this is on top of the five servings of fruits and vegetables you should aim to eat each day.

Call Your Health Coach for More Information (888) 343-3822

Resources:

<http://www.heart.org>

<http://www.diabetes.org/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/diabetes/DS01121>