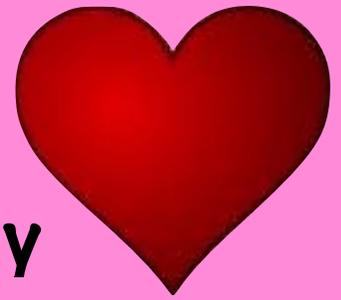




In Good Health Newsletter - February



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February

Risk Factors

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Risk Factors

Certain factors contribute to the unwanted buildup of fatty deposits (atherosclerosis) that narrow arteries throughout your body. You can improve or eliminate many of these risk factors to reduce your chances of having a first or subsequent heart attack.

Family history of heart attack. If your siblings, parents or grandparents have had early heart attacks (by age 55 for male relatives and by age 65 for female relatives), you may be at increased risk.

Lack of physical activity. An inactive lifestyle contributes to high blood cholesterol levels and obesity. People who get regular aerobic exercise have better cardiovascular fitness, which decreases their overall risk of heart attack. Exercise is also beneficial in lowering high blood pressure.

Obesity. Obesity is associated with high blood cholesterol levels, high triglyceride levels, high blood pressure and diabetes. Losing just 10 percent of your body weight can lower this risk, however.

Uncontrolled Hypertension - High blood pressure

Age. Men age 45 or older and women age 55 or older are more likely to have a heart attack than are younger men and women.

Tobacco. Smoking and long-term exposure to secondhand smoke increase the risk of a heart attack.

High blood cholesterol or triglyceride levels. A high level of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol) is most likely to narrow arteries. A high level of triglycerides, a type of blood fat related to your diet, also ups your risk of heart attack. However, a high level of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol) lowers your risk of heart attack.

Stress. You may respond to stress in ways that can increase your risk of a heart attack.

Illegal drug use. Using stimulant drugs, such as cocaine or amphetamines, can trigger a spasm of your coronary arteries that can cause a heart attack.

A history of preeclampsia. This condition causes high blood pressure during pregnancy and increases the lifetime risk of heart disease.

A history of an autoimmune condition, such as rheumatoid arthritis or lupus. Conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and other autoimmune conditions can increase your risk of having a heart attack

Diabetes. Heart disease and blood vessel disease are common problems for many people who don't have their diabetes under control. You're at least twice as likely to have heart problems and strokes as people who don't have the condition.



Unexpected Heart Attack Triggers

Lack of Sleep You'll feel grumpy and tired if you don't get enough sleep on a regular basis, but it can raise your risk of a heart attack, too. In one study, researchers found that people who usually slept fewer than 6 hours a night were twice as likely to have a heart attack as those who slept 6 to 8. Doctors aren't sure exactly why this is, but they do know that losing sleep can raise your blood pressure and lead to inflammation. Neither of those is good for your heart.

Migraine Headaches People who get these are more likely to have a heart attack later in life than those who don't. And ones that include auras -- strange sights, sounds, or feelings that start before the headache hits -- seem to have a stronger link to heart problems.

Cold Weather It's a shock to the system. Being outside in the winter months can cause your arteries to narrow, making it harder for blood to reach your heart. On top of that, your heart has to work harder to keep your body warm. If you're concerned about it, play it smart in cold temperatures, and limit heavy physical activity, like snow shoveling.

Air Pollution & Car Exhaust Heart attacks are more common when air pollution levels are high. People who breathe dirty air on a regular basis are more likely to have clogged arteries and heart disease. Sitting in traffic may be especially dangerous, because it can combine car fumes with anger or frustration.

A Big Heavy Meal Think twice before going back for seconds or thirds -- it may hurt more than your waistline. When you eat large amounts of food in one sitting, it leads to higher levels of the stress hormone norepinephrine in your body. That can raise your blood pressure and heart rate, and it may trigger heart attacks in some people. Very fatty meals can also cause a sudden jump in a kind of fat in your blood, and that may temporarily damage some blood vessels as well.

Strong Emotions, Positive or Negative Anger, grief, and stress are known triggers of heart problems, but joyful events can sometimes lead to a heart attack as well. It can be triggered by the kind of emotions that go along with a surprise birthday party, a wedding, or the birth of a grandchild.

Sudden or Intense Exertion Getting in shape will protect your heart in the long run, but doing too much could be dangerous. About 6% of heart attacks are triggered by extreme physical effort. And while you've probably heard that exercise is a good way to relieve stress, it's especially important not to overdo it when you're angry or upset.

A Cold or the Flu When your immune system fights off a bug, it can cause inflammation that can damage your heart and arteries. In one study, people with respiratory infections were twice as likely to have a heart attack. But their risk level went back to normal after they'd been clear of the infection a few weeks. Heart attack rates are also higher during flu outbreaks.

Asthma Your chances of having a heart attack go up about 70% if you have this lung disease. Even if you use an inhaler to keep it under control, your risk is still higher than normal. Because of your asthma, you also may tend to ignore chest tightness, which can be an early sign of a heart attack. Doctors don't know if breathing problems trigger heart attacks or if they simply have a common cause: inflammation.

Getting out of Bed in the Morning Heart attacks are more common in the morning. Your brain floods your body with hormones to help you wake up, and that puts some extra stress on your heart. You may also be dehydrated after a long sleep, which can make your heart work harder, too.

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Unexpected Heart Attack Triggers

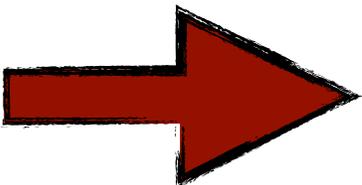
Disasters, Natural or Manmade Studies have shown that heart attack rates go up after major disasters like earthquakes or terrorist attacks. And not just immediately following them, but even up to a few years later. You may not be able to avoid these kinds of situations, but you can do things to manage your stress afterward, like make sure you get enough rest and exercise.

Spectator Sports Playing sports can possibly trigger a heart attack -- and watching them can, too. In 2006, heart attacks in Germany spiked during the national team's World Cup soccer games. And after the 1980 Super Bowl, fatal heart attacks were up in Los Angeles after the Rams lost. But they were down after the 1984 Super Bowl, when the L.A. Raiders won.

Alcohol A drink a day seems to help protect your heart against disease, but heavy drinking may do just the opposite. Over time, that can raise your blood pressure, increase certain kinds of bad cholesterol, and lead to weight gain -- all of which can hurt your heart. There also can be short-term consequences: A single night of binge drinking can raise your risk of heart attack over the next week, according to one study.

Assessing Your Own Risk For Heart Disease

The bad news about heart disease is that it remains extremely prevalent in our society. The good news is that the factors that determine our risk of developing heart disease are, to a large extent, under our control. We ourselves have a lot to say about whether we will develop early cardiac disease.



To Assess Your Own Risk for Heart Disease, You need to Gather the Following Information:

- Whether you smoke or not
- Your total and HDL cholesterol levels
- Your blood pressure
- Whether you have evidence of diabetes or metabolic syndrome
- Whether you are overweight for your age and height
- Whether close relatives have had premature heart disease

With this information you can place yourself in one of three categories, *low, intermediate, or high*

To be in the low risk category all of the following must be present

- nonsmoker
- total cholesterol less than 200 mg/dl, HDL cholesterol greater than 40 mg/dl
- systolic bp less than 120, diastolic less than 80
- no evidence of diabetes
- not overweight
- no family history of premature cardiovascular disease

You are in the high risk category if you have any of the following:

- known coronary artery disease or other vascular disease
- type 2 diabetes
- over age 65 with multiple (more than one) risk factors

You are in the intermediate group if you don't fit into the low or high risk category



If you are at **low risk**, you do not need any special medical interventions to reduce your risk, except perhaps for routine coaching on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. About 35% of U.S. adults fall into this category.

If you are in the **high risk** group, your doctor should strongly consider placing you on appropriate treatments that have been proven to reduce the risk of heart attack and death. In addition, your doctor may want to do a stress/thallium study to assess whether you may have significant coronary artery disease already. About 25% of U.S. adults are in the high-risk category.

If you are in the **intermediate risk** group, you should take aggressive steps to modify the risk factors keeping you out of the low risk category. Also, you should discuss with your doctor whether further testing should be done to characterize your risk more accurately. Such testing might include having your C-reactive protein (CRP) level measured, and perhaps getting a calcium scan. Roughly 40% of U.S. adults are in the intermediate risk category.

Again, if your doctor has not performed a formal cardiac risk assessment, you should estimate your risk yourself. And, if your risk appears to be intermediate or high, you need to talk to your doctor about taking aggressive measures to prevent heart disease.

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8 Ways to Keep Your Heart Happy

Manage your diet and weight. A poor diet often leads to obesity and obesity can be very damaging to the heart and vascular system especially when accompanied by a sedentary lifestyle

Get plenty of exercise! A sedentary lifestyle is very bad for the entire cardiovascular system, and it can also contribute to metabolic problems, such as high cholesterol and high blood sugar.

Manage your cholesterol levels

Manage your blood pressure. Inadequately treated hypertension can lead to both heart attacks and especially strokes.

Don't Smoke! Of all the things you can do to ruin your health, smoking is the most ruinous. If you smoke you are likely to develop heart disease decades earlier than you otherwise might. Even if you don't develop premature heart disease, you will likely suffer from one of the other scourges of smoking: cancer, lung disease, premature aging, and other conditions that make you sickly, or wrinkly and old, before your time.

Learn to manage stress

Control your Blood Sugar. Insulin resistance which can manifest as either diabetes or metabolic syndrome—leads to high blood sugar and a host of other metabolic problems that greatly increase your risk of heart disease.

Get Started With Exercise to Lower Blood Pressure



Exercise is one of the keys to lower your blood pressure. Working out also boosts the effectiveness of blood pressure medication if you're already being treated for hypertension. You don't have to be an athlete, either.

Put The Fun Back Into Exercise Find activities you enjoy, and aim for 30 minutes a day of "exercise" on most days of the week. If you can't stand the gym, not a problem. Dancing counts. So do yoga, hiking, gardening, and anything else that gets your heart beating a bit faster. Since you're going to be making it a habit, pick things you'll want to do often. Let your doctor know what you have in mind, so they can make sure you're ready.

Get Stronger Find activities you enjoy, and aim for 30 minutes a day of "exercise" on most days of the week. If you can't stand the gym, not a problem. Dancing counts. So do yoga, hiking, gardening, and anything else that gets your heart beating a bit faster. Since you're going to be making it a habit, pick things you'll want to do often. Let your doctor know what you have in mind, so they can make sure you're ready.

Try a Trainer If you want a pro to help you get started, consider getting a trainer to show you what to do. They can help you do each move right and get the best results.

Dive in & Swim Doing aerobic exercise ("cardio") is good for your blood pressure. Swimming is a gentle way to do it. Go for 30 minutes, or work up to that amount if that's too much right now.

How much exercise is enough?



Do something that is moderate in intensity—like brisk walking— for at least 30 minutes a day, 5 or more days a week. That may be enough to keep you off medications or help them work better. Exercise can lower your blood pressure by as much as **five to 15 points**. Gradually make your workouts more intense to keep lowering your blood pressure to safer levels.

Getting Started! Start slowly to prevent injuries. Start with 10 to 15 minutes of exercise you enjoy, such as walking around the block or on a treadmill. You can gradually make your workouts longer and more challenging.

Pace Yourself to Avoid Injuries If you're new to exercise, remember to pace yourself. Select a low- to moderate-intensity exercise such as gentle forms of yoga, gardening, or any other activity that you can do at a moderate pace. Gradually increase the intensity and duration of exercise as you become fitter, to help maintain your lowered blood pressure.

Do Mini Workouts Add 10-minute mini-workouts, and do these throughout your busy day. For example, you can jog in place or do calisthenics for 10 minutes. Three 10-minute mini-workouts equal 30 minutes of daily exercise in little bits of time you won't miss.

Make Exercise Convenient Commit to making exercise part of your schedule. Find a time that works for you. You can work out while the kids are at soccer practice, before or after work, or even during your lunch break. If it's hard to get out of the house, consider getting some workout apps or DVDs, a yoga mat, and hand-held weights you can use at home.

Set Up a Home Gym Pick items that fit in with what you want to do: a step bench, jump rope, fit ball, exercise bands or tubes, and weights, for example. You can store them in a closet when you're not using them. If you have more space and a bigger budget, consider getting a treadmill or stationary bike.

Warm Up & Cool Down Warming up before exercise and cooling down after are important for people with high blood pressure. These exercises let your heart rate rise and return to normal gradually. Walking in place or on a treadmill for 10 minutes is fine for warming up before exercise and also for cooling down.

Medication and Heart Rate Some heart medications such as beta-blockers or calcium channel blockers can slow your heart rate. Talk to your doctor and ask what your target heart rate zone should be during exercise if you take these medications.



Try a Heart Rate Watch A heart rate watch can let you quickly assess your pulse. Here's how to use one. Put the band that comes with it on your chest underneath your shirt. By looking at the watch during exercise, you can see your actual heart rate. This is a good alternative to taking your pulse manually. Ask your doctor to recommend the best target heart rate zone (or training zone) for you.

Know the Safety Tips No matter what exercise you do, be aware of your limitations. If the exercise or activity hurts, then stop! If you feel dizzy or have discomfort in your chest, arms, or throat, stop. Also, go slower on hot and humid

Beyond Exercise:
The DASH Diet
Lose 10 Pounds
Watch Out For Salt



DASH Diet You can lower your systolic blood pressure (the top number) by switching to the DASH diet. The DASH diet is based on 2,000 calories a day. It's rich in fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products. It's also low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and total fat. According to studies, adopting a DASH diet can reduce systolic blood pressure by eight to 14 points. For those over age 50, a systolic blood pressure higher than 140 is a greater risk factor for heart disease than the diastolic blood pressure (lower number).

Lose 10 Pounds If you're overweight, losing 10 pounds can help reduce or prevent high blood pressure. To lose weight, take in fewer calories than you use each day. Ask your doctor or a registered dietitian how many calories you need daily for weight loss. Exercise helps you burn even more calories.

Watch Out For Salt National guidelines recommend not getting more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium a day (about 1 teaspoon of table salt). The limit is 1,500 milligrams a day for some people, depending on age and other things. By staying on a sodium-restricted diet, your systolic blood pressure (top number) may drop two to eight points. Salt-restricted diets can also help enhance the effects of most blood pressure medications.

Tip: Substitute herbs for salt when cooking, and avoid processed meats and canned foods.

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Barbecue Pulled Chicken Healthy Super Bowl Option



This BBQ pulled chicken recipe is a fanciful reinterpretation of pulled pork that slow-cooks chicken in lots of tangy tomato sauce. Have sliced jalapeños, sliced red onions and some sour cream on hand to top this barbecue pulled chicken, which makes a hearty main course. You can turn it into an unbelievable sandwich or serve it on mashed potatoes or even whole-grain spaghetti. Serve with shredded napa cabbage tossed with low-fat mayonnaise, cider vinegar, celery seed and honey to taste.

Ingredients

- 1 8-ounce can reduced-sodium tomato sauce
- 1 4-ounce can chopped green chiles, drained
- 3 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon sweet or smoked paprika
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon ground chipotle chile
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of fat
- 1 small onion, finely chopped

Preparation

1. Stir tomato sauce, chiles, vinegar, honey, paprika, tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, ground chipotle and salt in a 6-quart slow cooker until smooth. Add chicken, onion and garlic; stir to combine.
2. Put the lid on and cook on low until the chicken can be pulled apart, about 5 hours.
3. Transfer the chicken to a cutting board and shred with a fork. Return the chicken to the sauce, stir well and serve.

Make Ahead Tip: Cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 1 month.

Nutrition Information

Serving size: ⅔ cup

Per serving: 214 calories; 8 g fat(2 g sat); 1 g fiber; 9 g carbohydrates; 25 g protein; 15 mcg folate; 130 mg cholesterol; 6 g sugars; 4 g added sugars; 711 IU vitamin A; 6 mg vitamin C; 26 mg calcium; 2 mg iron; 321 mg sodium; 442 mg potassium

Carbohydrate Servings: ½

Exchanges: ½ other carbohydrate, 4 lean meat

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