

Keeping your health and well-being in the know

MyHealthTALK

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Courtesy of Asset Health

FEBRUARY 2011 American Heart Month

Focus on Whole Grains

Incorporating whole grains into your diet has proven to reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and obesity. Whole grains contain some valuable antioxidants not found in vegetables or fruits, as well as B vitamins, vitamin E, iron, magnesium, and fiber. Try to make it a goal to eat at least 3 servings of whole grains a day. These grains usually have a nuttier flavor and will enhance your recipes.

Add these to your grocery list:

Barley
Brown Rice
Oatmeal
Popcorn
Quinoa
Whole or Cracked Wheat
Wild Rice
Couscous

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of disability. The most common heart disease in the United States is coronary heart disease, which often appears as a heart attack. The chance of developing coronary heart disease can be reduced by taking steps to prevent and control factors that put people at greater risk. Additionally, knowing the signs and symptoms of heart attack are crucial to the most positive outcomes after having a heart attack. People who have survived a heart attack can also work to reduce their risk of another heart attack or a stroke in the future.

Celebrate American Heart Month by taking 7 steps toward heart health.

7 Simple Steps to Take Towards a Heart Healthy Life

Get Active Finding time in our overscheduled lives for exercise is a challenge for all busy Americans. But the benefits far outweigh the sacrifices it takes to carve out that time. So no more excuses! Take an active role in determining your future. You deserve to give yourself the gift of living well with good health.

Control Cholesterol To keep your cholesterol under control The American Heart Association recommends that you: schedule a screening, eat foods low in cholesterol and saturated fat and free of trans fat, maintain a healthy weight, and stay physically active.

Eat Better A healthy diet and lifestyle are your best weapons to fight cardiovascular

disease. The American Heart Association recommends that you eat a wide variety of nutritious foods daily from each of the basic food groups.

Eat fish at least twice a week, especially those containing omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, trout, and herring) as these may help lower your risk of coronary artery disease. Choose lean meats and poultry without skin and prepare them without added saturated and trans fat. Select fat-free, 1 percent fat, and low-fat dairy products.

Cut back on oils and salt. Aim to eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol and less than 1500 milligrams of sodium per day.

Manage Blood Pressure Hypertension is the single most significant risk factor for heart disease. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can injure or kill you. It's sometimes called "the silent killer" because it has no symptoms.

Lose Weight Obesity is now recognized as a major, independent risk factor for heart disease. If you have too much fat — especially if a lot of it is at your waist — you're at higher risk for such health problems as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes.

Reduce Blood Sugar The American Heart Association considers diabetes one of the six major controllable risk factors for cardiovascular disease. It's critical for people with diabetes to have regular check-ups. Work closely with your healthcare provider to manage your diabetes and control any other risk factors.

Stop Smoking Smokers have significantly higher risk of developing many chronic disorders. Smoking is something you can control. If you are a smoker, take steps to quit.

Sources: *The American Heart Association, <http://mylifecheck.heart.org/Default.aspx>. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention*

Vitamin D: The Sunshine Vitamin

Vitamin D helps the body absorb the calcium it needs to build strong bones and teeth in childhood and adolescence. Adults need vitamin D and calcium to maintain bone mass. This helps prevent osteoporosis. Vitamin D also helps the body keep the right amount of calcium and phosphorus in the blood. Vitamin D is often called the “sunshine vitamin” because the body creates vitamin D after exposure to sunlight. Depending on geographical locations, 10 minutes of summer sunshine 3 to 4 times a week may be enough to help your body create the vitamin D it needs. If you don't get much exposure to the sun, suffer from milk allergies or have a strict vegetarian diet, you may be at risk of vitamin D deficiency.

Effects of Low Vitamin D

Many people do not get enough vitamin D, especially those who live in colder areas. It can also cause problems with children's teeth, such as cavities and problems with teeth structure.

Adults who don't get enough vitamin D are at risk for osteomalacia (muscle weakness and weak bones) and osteoporosis (thin bones).

Foods that are Rich in Vitamin D

Foods that naturally contain vitamin D include fish, fish oil, eggs, cheese and butter. There are vitamin-D fortified foods, such as milk and milk alternatives, orange juice and breakfast cereals. There are also over the counter and prescription Vitamin D supplements that you can get once you've talked to your doctor to determine what you may need.

Source: www.familydoctor.org



Feeling SAD? Fight the Winter Blues

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) also known as winter depression or winter blues is a mood disorder in which people experience irritability, decreased energy, feelings of exhaustion, changes in appetite especially a craving for carbohydrates which lead to weight gain and withdrawal from friends, family and social activities during the winter months. These feelings can be brought about due to unrealistic expectations, unpleasant holiday memories, the inability to be with family or the confinement of cold weather. Here are some suggestions to help you beat the winter blues.

1. Light Therapy

Expose yourself to sunlight – go for a walk when the sun is out or if you are unable to get outside buy some high intensity indoor lights. You do not need to buy a full spectrum bulb you can use a standard CFL bulb with a color temperature of 4100 Kelvin. If you have the budget you can try using a light box, which is designed to provide therapeutic doses of light to SAD sufferers.

2. Exercise

Boosting your exercise in the winter can help to lift your mood and energy and help to decrease stress.

3. Eat Healthy

Eat foods that are naturally carbohydrate like rice, pasta and fruits. Also try whole grain breads and crackers, or starchy vegetables like corn or potatoes. Foods high in Vitamin D can increase serotonin levels and supplements rich with B-complex vitamins taken daily can help improve your energy level. Try to limit the consumption of alcohol, sugar and high fat foods which may temporarily lift your mood but then leave you feeling tired soon after.

4. Change your thoughts

Try and think less negatively, this will improve your mood. If you start to feel less peppy or enthusiastic during the winter you can accept that feeling as a normal response to winter without getting down on yourself about it. Prayer, meditation, inspirational readings and religious observations can also help to improve your mood.

5. Get Help

If you are experiencing significant seasonal depression or have a recurrent pattern of seasonal depression, you may benefit from professional help. You can find a qualified practitioner by contacting your local mental health association or the behavioral health department at a medical center in your area.

Sources: *Lighten up! How to beat the Winter Blues* – Jeffrey Rossman, PHD
Go Away Winter Blues! – Margareth Montenegro