Nutrition News

Live Smart for Your Heart

What can you do to protect your heart?

Maintain a healthy weight. Learn your waist circumference; high numbers reflect excess belly fat, which raises heart disease risk. Keep your waist circumference below 35 inches (for women) or below 40 inches (for men).

Abstain from smoking. Cigarette smokers are 2 to 3 times more likely than non-smokers to die from coronary heart disease.

Exercise regularly. Routine cardio exercise, such as a daily brisk walk, can help your heart, blood pressure, blood sugar and your weight. Get at least 30 minutes of cardio exercise 5 days and 2 to 3 strength-training sessions a week.

Watch what you eat. Heart-friendly eating starts with limiting saturated and trans fats, and includes lean protein, such as beans, poultry, soy-based foods, low-fat dairy and nuts. Also eat at least 2 cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables ever day.

Get healthy screenings. These include monitoring your blood pressure, cholesterol, triglycerides and blood sugar throughout life.

Stay Cool With No-Cook Meals

When the temperature soars outdoors, you may not want to turn on your oven and add heat inside. Keep it cool by opting for a dinner menu that requires no cooking.

Chill out with cool soups. From cold cherry soup to cucumber-based gazpacho, chilled soups are the perfect way to cool down on a hot day. Plus, they help you add more vegetables and fruit to your diet.

Salads reign supreme. For a simple, refreshing dinner on a hot evening, nothing beats salad – and your options are endless. Stock up on mixed greens, cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots, avocados, mushrooms, peppers and fruits such as strawberries and sliced apples. And don’t forget protein. Fill your pantry with cans of tuna, salmon, chickpeas and lentils – they’re all protein-rich, no-cook salad toppers.

Crisp Fruit Salad

Serves: 6    Serving Size: ¾ cup
1 red apple
1 pear
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 cup seedless grapes, halved
½ cup raisins
1 container (6 ounces) low fat, sugar free vanilla yogurt
2 tablespoons low fat mayonnaise-type salad dressing

1. Wash fruit under cool running water.
2. Chop apple and pear (leave skin on). Add to large serving bowl and toss with lemon juice.
3. Add grapes and raisins to bowl.
4. Combine yogurt and salad dressing in a small bowl and spread over fruit.
5. Stir to combine. Refrigerate. Best eaten the day it is prepared.

Nutritional Facts: 1 serving equals: 120 calories, 2g total fat, 0g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 0mg cholesterol, 55mg sodium, 26g total carbohydrate, 2g dietary fiber, 20g Sugars, 2g Protein, Vitamin A 2%, Vitamin C 10%, Calcium 6%, Iron 2%
Clever Ideas

- Use dried cranberries or cherries instead of raisin.
- Add ½ cup celery, chopped (about 1 stalk).
- Add ¼ cup walnuts or almonds, chopped.
- For a main dish salad, add chicken chunks, canned tuna, or salmon.
- Try with lemons, plain, or plain Greek yogurt.

Wrap it up. Pack salad ingredients into a whole-grain wheat or corn tortilla for an easy sandwich. Add low-fat cheese, sodium-reduced turkey breast deli slices or store-bought rotisserie chicken without the skin.

Company coming? No need to turn on the stove. Serve a chilled shrimp ring with some zesty salsa. Or offer guests an elegant cheese tray with whole-grain crackers, assorted nuts and fruits. Vegetables and dip are another no-full option.

To add no-calorie, fat-free flavor, add fresh herbs to your meals. Mint, parsley, coriander and basil are perfect for soups, sandwiches and salads.

Weight-Loss Gains

There are some powerful reasons to lose weight, beyond improving the look of your body. Being overweight or obese raises your risk for developing several chronic conditions—diabetes, heart disease, arthritis and others.

Losing even a small amount of excess weight can produce many protective health benefits.

- Blood pressure decreases.
- Blood sugar levels decrease in people with type 2 diabetes.
- Cholesterol and triglyceride levels improve.
- Unhealthy abdominal fat decreases.
- Pain and disability from osteoarthritis decreases.
- Sleep improves, particularly in people with obstructive sleep apnea.

Weight loss can sometimes reduce or eliminate the need for medications to control hypertension, type 2 diabetes and arthritis.

You gain by losing. People who maintain a significant weight loss report improvements in energy levels, physical mobility, general mood, self-confidence, and general quality of life, according to the National Weight Control Registry.

How you lose the weight matters. The best plan is one you can live with long term. Ultra-strict diets, fasting and drugs may have adverse health effects and provide merely temporary results. The proven formula: nutritious meal planning, removing food cues from your home and work, with a little splurging, daily exercise and patience.

Guidelines for improving health: Target a weight loss of 10% of your body weight (e.g., losing 20 pounds if you weigh 200) at a rate of 1 to 2 pounds per week. The results will vary depending on your metabolism, physical activity and other factors.

Imagine feeling lighter as you climb stairs and walk and move about, free of that extra 20 pounds.

Our 5 Best Exercise Tips

1. Topping the list is cardio exercise to help control weight. If you do no other exercise this year, get in shape with sustained, moderate aerobic workouts for at least 30 minutes 5 days a week.

2. Next, muscle up. Strength-building workouts 2 to 3 times weekly can help prevent and reduce symptoms of many age-related conditions, including: arthritis, back pain, heart disease, obesity, osteoporosis and poor balance.

3. Enjoy it. List several activities that suit you. Vary your exercise - from swimming to golf to group aerobic - as you vary other interests in life.

4. Make it convenient. Choose classes, a gym, a pool or a walking trail close by. At home, set up equipment in an area that’s inviting and comfortable.

5. Get your health care providers advice, especially if you have physical limitations. Tip: Ask about a personal trainer, who can help you start with a customized routine.

Source: TOPHEALTH