

## To Your Health!

By Judy Hargis, P.A



### Heart Health 101

February is "Heart Month" and it is important to remind everyone about the importance of maintaining a healthy heart. A family history of heart disease does not equal heart disease for you. You can reduce your risk of heart disease by lifestyle changes that we have discussed in previous columns. Let's take a closer look at the new guidelines

for heart health.

If you want to improve your heart and blood vessels, you can. Last year the American Heart Association (AHA) took all the recommendations for a healthy heart and developed a checklist called "Life's simple seven". Each item on the list was based on AHA criteria that define ideal cardiovascular health. This was based on a nationwide study of 18,000 adults. This study found that adults who adhered to at least five of the criteria had a 55% lower risk of death over five years than those individuals who met none of the criteria.

"When you ask Americans if they are in good health, about 35% say yes", according to Ralph Sacco MD, president of the AHA, "but less than 1% meet all seven criteria."

He believes that everyone can find something to improve in terms of his or her heart health. Let's take a closer look at the new guidelines for heart health.

**Smoking:** This is at the top of the list because AHA calls smoking "the most preventable cause of premature death in the United States." Smoking increases the risk of coronary heart disease, in which the vessels that carry blood and oxygen to the heart are narrowed due to a build up of plaque. It also decreases levels of HDL, which is good cholesterol, and makes the blood more likely to form dangerous clots.

**Healthy weight:** Weight also correlates with heart disease. Too much fat, especially around the waist, increases the risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. Body mass index is a measure of weight relative to height. It is a good tool to help assess body fat. To calculate your BMI, multiply your weight (in pounds) by 703 and divide that number by your height (in inches). The AHA recommends a BMI below 25.

**Exercise:** Exercise helps us lose and maintain a healthy weight. It also reduces blood pressure, increases HDL (good cholesterol), and improves the body's sensitivity to insulin, which helps control blood sugar. AHA guidelines recommend 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week or vigorous exercise at least 75 minutes per week.

**Healthy eating:** The guidelines advise eating at least 4-1/2 cups of fruits and vegetables per day, at least 3 ounces of whole grains per day, at least two servings of fish each week, less than 1500 milligrams of sodium per day and no more than 450 calories worth of sugar-sweetened beverages in a week. To meet the heart healthy

ideal, you need to follow at least four of these five rules. Studies have shown that diets high in fruits and vegetables can reduce high blood pressure and other risk factors for heart disease. There is also evidence that whole grains can reduce LDL (bad cholesterol). Lowering sodium intake to 1500 milligrams can lower both systolic blood pressure (top number) and diastolic blood pressure (lower number) in people with high blood pressure. Dozens of studies support this finding.

Watch your numbers: three important measures that in-

crease your risk for heart disease make up the last three criteria on the checklist. They include blood pressure, blood glucose and blood cholesterol. Everyone should know these numbers. Studies have shown that people who keep these numbers in a healthy range reduced their risk of death from cardiovascular disease over 16 to 22 years by 70% to 85% compared with people with at least one measure in the high-risk range. Blood pressure should be maintained below 120/80, fasting blood glucose should be below 100 and total cholesterol should be below 200 mg/dl. HDL cholesterol should be below 100 and LDL cholesterol numbers should be above 40. Both are very important.

82,000,000 people in the United States have some form of heart disease. That is one in three people. 2200 people die from heart disease every day. Heart disease is the number one cause of death for women 20-years old and over. It kills more women than the next four causes combined, including all forms of cancer. It is good news to know that we can greatly reduce our risk of premature death from heart disease. Our genetic make-up may predispose us to heart disease but we can greatly reduce our risk by eliminating the triggers that turn those genes on. It is important to take good care of your heart health and know the signs of heart attack.

The signs of a heart attack include: Pain in the center of the chest that feels like pressure, squeezing, pressure or fullness. Pain that radiates to one or both arms, the neck, back, jaw or stomach. Feeling short of breath with or without chest pain. Also, breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or feeling lightheaded. Both men and women can experience these symptoms but women sometimes experience symptoms such as nausea, breaking out in a cold sweat, weakness and/or nausea without chest pain.

If you experience any of these symptoms call 911 immediately. Do not drive yourself to the hospital. Wait for the paramedics. It can make the difference in your survival.

Next month I will provide information about polycystic ovarian syndrome and, in April, I will give an update on immunizations

As always, we appreciate your questions and comments. You can contact us at [health@the-independent.net](mailto:health@the-independent.net).

## Tips for healthy recipes given

People often wonder about recipes that are appropriate for health conditions like heart disease, high cholesterol and diabetes. Although there are cookbooks that are marketed to people with these conditions, sometimes a little alteration of a recipe you already have is enough to make it suitable for someone with a special diet. The bonus is that it makes it a healthier choice for everyone eating.

To make a recipe healthier, you can lower the fat, increase the fiber, decrease the sodium or cholesterol, or lower the sugar. To alter a recipe, you can do one of three things: omit an ingredient, decrease or increase the amount of an ingredient, or substitute a more nutritious ingredient.

For example, in many baked goods:

- Salt can be reduced or eliminated. Other seasonings, like basil, cardamom, thyme or cayenne pepper can replace salt as a flavoring (depending on the recipe). Another option is to use fruit, its juice or the rind (e.g., a lemon or lime) to bring out the flavor of fish without using salt.

- You can also reduce the amount of sugar or fat by using the next lowest common measurement. So if the recipe calls for 1 cup of sugar, use 3/4 cups instead. If it calls for 1/3 cup honey, try 1/4 cup.

- Applesauce or yogurt can often be used to replace up to an equal amount of fat in a recipe.

No matter what kind of alteration you've made, it's wise to try a small batch of the new recipe before you serve it to others. It's also important to make small adjustments until you go too far – then back up one small step to a product that still tastes good but is healthier than the original. Keep in mind that altering recipes is all about experimentation and you can try it for anything you cook. When you create healthier alternatives for everyday favorites, the health benefits add up over time.

Source: Janet Hackert, regional nutrition & health education specialist, University of Missouri Extension

**Columbia County  
Mental Health  
800-294-5211**

**Suicide Hotline  
1-800-784-2433  
or  
1-800-273-TALK(8255)**

**Domestic Abuse  
Hotline  
503-397-6161**

**or  
866-397-6161  
Military Helpline  
888-HLP-4-VET  
(888-457-4838)**

**Terry's Gym**  
A COMPLETE CO-ED GYM FACILITY  
503-901-1705  
16720 Noakes Rd Vernonia, OR