

Live Healthy Georgia – Seniors Taking Charge!



February 2007 Newsletter

February is American Heart Month!

By Mindy Bell, BS and Bree Marsh, MS

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, chocolate hearts for your sweetheart are everywhere. But have you stopped to think about the health of your own heart, which has such an important job in your body?

Heart disease is the number one killer in America for both men and women! However, there are many things you can do to lessen the risk for heart disease. It is also important to be prepared for an emergency, such as a heart attack or stroke.

Heart disease is caused by a complex interaction among many factors. Some factors are not controllable, such as increasing age, male sex, and heredity. However, there are even more factors that you **can** control to a certain degree. Examples include: tobacco use, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, physical inactivity, obesity and overweight, uncontrolled diabetes, and excessive alcohol intake.

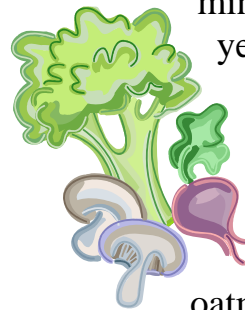


There are many simple things you can do daily to decrease your risk for heart disease, including:

Eat more nutrient-rich foods.

A variety of brightly colored fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins,

minerals, and antioxidants, yet low in calories and fat.



Whole grain foods are nutrient and fiber powerhouses, too. Look for 100% whole wheat bread, brown rice,

oatmeal, and other whole

grains you enjoy. Eating fish can also help to keep your heart healthy. Try to get in two servings per week, especially the ones rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon and trout.

Eat fewer calorie-dense/nutrient-poor foods.

Examples of nutrient-poor foods are sugary sodas, and high-fat desserts and processed foods, such as cookies, cakes, pies, and ice-cream. Many fried foods and fatty animal products, like butter and cream, can also add excess calories with little nutritional value.

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Reading food labels can help you to become more aware of foods containing a lot of saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and added sugars.



Using lean cooking methods such as grilling and baking instead of frying is also a good way to eat less fat and calories.

Be physically active. Try to add more activity to your everyday routine, such as walking. An inexpensive pedometer may help motivate you to walk more. Try participating in group activities, and be physically active at home by doing



activities such as housework, gardening, exercise videos, and chair exercises.

If you consume alcohol, do so in moderation, and be smoke free. Limit alcohol to one drink per day for women and two per day for men. If you smoke, the benefits of quitting are nearly immediate. Consider enrolling in a smoking cessation program if you need help quitting.

Get checked regularly and take your medications as recommended. See your health care provider

regularly for check-ups to help control risk factors for heart disease.

With age, it is especially important to be prepared in case you or someone around you has warning signs of a heart attack or stroke. Call 9-1-1 immediately if you see the warning signs. The signs of a heart attack include chest discomfort, discomfort in other areas of the upper body, shortness of breath, or other signs such as nausea or a cold sweat. The signs of a stroke include sudden numbness or weakness of the face or limbs, sudden confusion or trouble speaking, sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes, sudden trouble walking or dizziness, and sudden severe headache with no known cause.

For more information, see:

The American Heart Association at:
www.americanheart.org

2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans at:
<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/html/brochure.htm>

