

## It's time to change

BY ANDRAS NEUMARK, M.D.

IT WAS DURING MY LAST appointment before my lunch break that I saw Debra. I had not seen her for a couple of months since she moved to Greenville. She lost more than 70 pounds, cut back on her cholesterol and diabetes medications and looked great! I was eager to learn her secret—how did she achieve that miracle? She showed me her recipes and food diaries, told me how she eliminated coffee and soft drinks from her diet and began walking and exercising.

Since I already knew all these ways to lose weight, I was a little bit disappointed. "What else did you do to lose so much weight?" I asked. She said, "You know, we had a support group over there. We met every week, called each other at home when we were struggling or failing off the diet and went for walks together in the park, sharing our frustrations and happy moments. By the way, could we have a support group here, in Elkin?" "Absolutely," I said with a big smile—I had an excellent

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At Blue Ridge Cardiology and Internal Medicine, you are part of our medical team when it comes to restoring your health. We work with you on your specific problem or concern because every patient is an individual.

# Blue Ridge Cardiology and Internal Medicine

# heart healthnews®



## Go Greek!

Try these  
good-for-you  
Athenian delights

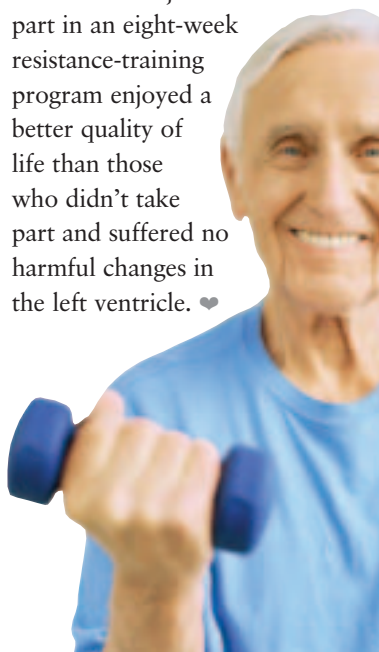
## Heart-health myth busters

**18** ways to get  
more exercise

Are you  
heart smart?  
Find out inside!

### PRIMING THE PUMP

Until recently, doctors were cautious about recommending strength training for patients with chronic heart failure, fearing it might harm the heart's left ventricle, its main pumping chamber. Now, a study in the *International Journal of Cardiology* says resistance training—exercise using weights, exercise bands or resistance machines—actually helps weakened hearts pump blood more efficiently, enabling people with heart failure to perform daily activities better. The researchers found that subjects who took part in an eight-week resistance-training program enjoyed a better quality of life than those who didn't take part and suffered no harmful changes in the left ventricle. ♥



### A HANDY WAY TO DETECT ARTERY DISEASE

Doctors may one day be able to tell whether a person has atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, by simply examining his or her palm. According to a report in the *American Heart Journal*, a test that measures cholesterol in the skin is a reliable way to assess the thickness of the carotid artery wall, an indicator of atherosclerosis. The test involves applying a solution to the palm for one minute. Then the hand is blotted dry and an indicator solution is applied, which turns blue. The hue, measured with a probe connected to a computer, measures cholesterol levels. Besides spotting vascular disease, the test may bring new meaning to the term “high-five.” ♥

### HEART PATIENTS AND THIS AMINO ACID DON'T MIX

If you've had a heart attack, you may be tempted to try anything to prevent another one. But don't put your bets on supplements of the amino acid L-arginine, especially if you're over age 60. Given claims that the supplement reduces blood vessel stiffness, researchers from Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore investigated its use in 153 heart attack patients and found that those who took L-arginine experienced no improvements in heart function or artery elasticity. What's more, six subjects, including five over age 60, died during the study, causing the research to be stopped. ♥

### FIGURING OUT FAT LABELS

Trans fats are the new bad guys in the diet world. Like saturated fats, trans fats raise levels of LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, in the blood. However, avoiding trans fats completely is a bit tricky—a food label that reads 0 grams trans fat isn't necessarily free of the stuff. Because testing methods aren't reliable below 0.5 grams, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration allows manufacturers to list levels below 0.5 grams as 0 grams. So, eating several servings of foods with 0.4 grams of trans fats (but listed as 0) could add up to

way too much. Trans fats are typically found in many cakes, cookies, crackers and muffins and in deep-fried restaurant foods. What to do? Check the ingredient list. The words “partially hydrogenated” indicate the food contains trans fats. And read the entire label, looking at all fats. Some manufacturers are lowering trans fats in their products but increasing saturated fats. ♥



### did you know?

- ▶ One year after you quit smoking, your heart disease risk drops by more than half.
- ▶ Most women—81 percent—don't know their cholesterol levels, according to a Harris Interactive survey, and 84 percent could not name their triglyceride level.
- ▶ A croissant and an oat-bran bagel have about the same number of calories, but a croissant has 6.6 grams of saturated fat compared to 0.2 grams for the bagel.

# 6

## misconceptions about heart health



WHAT YOU *THINK* YOU KNOW ABOUT HEART HEALTH may hurt you. Here's the truth behind some myths, confusing health headlines and changing recommendations.

### **Myth 1: A lot of vitamin E protects your heart.**

Recent studies suggest that high daily doses of vitamin E supplements—400 IU or more—are associated with a higher risk of death from any cause, including cardiovascular disease. Until more research is done on safe levels of vitamin E, take one multivitamin pill a day, but aim to get your vitamin E naturally from a healthy, varied diet instead of from supplements.

### **Myth 2: Heart attacks start with chest pain.**

The classic heart attack comes on with crushing chest pain, but many start with discomfort, such as pressure, squeezing or fullness in the chest. Some heart attack symptoms don't appear in the chest at all, but rather in the upper body with pain or discomfort in the arms, neck, jaw, back or stomach. Other signs can include shortness of breath, cold sweats, nausea and light-headedness. If you suspect a heart attack, call for immediate emergency help.

### **Myth 3: Heart disease is a man's problem.**

Heart disease is the leading killer of women, claiming more women's lives than the next five causes of death combined—about 500,000 women's lives a year.

### **Myth 4: Smoking hurts lungs, not hearts.**

You're at risk for lung disease if you smoke, but you're also two to four times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than a nonsmoker. Regular exposure to secondhand smoke is bad for your heart as well as your lungs.

### **Myth 5: Exercising three times a week is enough.**

It's a good start, but it's not the ultimate goal. New government recommendations say we should all be exercising at a moderate to vigorous level for at least 30 minutes on most days. To lose weight, make that 60 minutes. It doesn't have to be a formal gym session for it to count. Several brisk 15-minute walks add up.

### **Myth 6: Chocolate is good for your heart.**

Recent studies indicate that dark chocolate has a heart-healthy value, but eating too much of it can lead to unwanted pounds, ultimately hurting your heart. Limit yourself to a small amount if you indulge. ♥

# Dine the Greek way

But beware of Trojan horses—  
not *all* Greek food is healthy

ALTHOUGH MANY OF THEIR MEALS CONSIST OF 40 percent fat, residents of the Greek isle of Crete who eat a traditional diet live longer than most populations on the planet. In fact, Greeks who haven't succumbed to Western-style meals are 20 percent less likely to die of coronary artery disease and about 30 percent less likely to die of cancer than Americans.

These are stats that make nutritionists take note, and what they've found is that the traditional Greek diet—which focuses on vegetables, fruits, grains, beans, nuts, fish and yogurt; olive oil as the sole source of added fat; only a few weekly servings of fish, poultry, eggs and sweets; and red meats saved for special occasions only—is one of the healthiest eating styles you can choose. What's more, the Greek diet is tasty—a sign that you don't have to give up good food to stay healthy.

But be cautious: Some Greek foods found on these shores don't fit the heart-healthy profile of traditional Greek cuisine. The nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest analyzed typical restaurant-size portions of some popular Greek meals. What they found could stop your heart:

## GREEK TREAT

**Spanakopita** (spinach pie in phyllo dough)

**Greek salad** with dressing (entrée size)

**Dolmades** (grape leaves stuffed with meat and rice)

**Moussaka** (a meat casserole dish)

**Beef or lamb gyro** (sandwich)

**Baklava** (honey and nut pastry)

## THE DAMAGE

410 calories, 24 grams of fat

390 calories, 30 grams of fat

540 calories, 32 grams of fat

830 calories, 32 grams of fat

760 calories, 20 grams of fat

550 calories, 21 grams of fat

Skip these diet killers, devise lower-fat versions of them or choose some of the following Greek delights.

Source: Center for Science in the Public Interest



## Spinach and feta pie

- 1¼ cups water
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- ½ cup uncooked white rice
- 10 ounces frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- egg substitute equivalent to 4 eggs
- ¼ cup fat-free milk
- 4 ounces feta cheese with sun-dried tomatoes and basil
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, crumbled
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 medium lemons, quartered

In a medium broilerproof skillet, bring the water to a boil over high heat. Stir in the onions and rice. Return to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes.

Stir in the spinach, egg substitute, milk, 2 ounces of feta, oregano and salt. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook, covered for 20 minutes, or until the eggs are almost set. Sprinkle the remaining 2 ounces of feta over the pie. Meanwhile, preheat the broiler.

Broil for 2 minutes, or until the cheese begins to melt slightly. Remove from the oven and let stand for 5 minutes to allow the flavors to blend and for easier cutting. (The egg mixture will continue to cook while the pie broils and stands.) Cut into four wedges. Serve with lemon to squeeze on top.

*Serves 4. Per serving: 249 calories, 6.5 g total fat (4.0 g saturated fat, 0 g polyunsaturated fat, 0 g monounsaturated fat), 21 mg cholesterol, 705 mg sodium, 31 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 7 g sugar, 16 g protein*

## Greek-style stewed chicken

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 pound chicken breast tenders or tenderloins, all visible fat discarded
- 1 medium green bell pepper, cut into 1-inch strips
- 2 medium shallots, peeled and quartered
- 14.5-ounce can no-salt-added diced tomatoes, undrained
- ½ cup fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth
- ¼ cup Kalamata olives, drained and coarsely chopped
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, crumbled
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Pour the oil into the skillet and swirl to coat the bottom. Cook the chicken for 2 minutes. Turn and cook for 2 minutes.

Add the bell pepper and shallots. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender-crisp, stirring occasionally.

Stir in the remaining ingredients. Bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the chicken is no longer pink in the center.

*Serves 4. Per serving: 197 calories, 5 g total fat (1 g saturated fat, 0.5 g polyunsaturated fat, 3 g monounsaturated fat), 66 mg cholesterol, 404 mg sodium, 10 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 28 g protein*



## Greek-style tuna steaks with roasted vegetables



- vegetable oil spray
- 1 cup uncooked couscous
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (extra virgin preferred)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, crumbled
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 2 8-ounce tuna steaks (about one-inch thick)
- 1 medium yellow squash, diced
- 1 medium onion, cut into 8 wedges
- 1 medium green or yellow bell pepper, cut into thin strips
- 1 medium tomato, cut into 8 wedges
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1 medium lemon, cut into 4 wedges

Preheat the broiler. Lightly spray a broiler pan with vegetable oil spray. Prepare the couscous using the package directions, omitting the salt and oil. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, stir together the oil, lemon juice, oregano, garlic, lemon zest, salt and pepper. Set aside.

Rinse the tuna and pat dry with paper towels. Cut the tuna in half. Place the tuna in the center of the broiler pan. Place the squash, onion, bell pepper and tomato pieces around the tuna in a single layer. Lightly spray the tuna and vegetables with vegetable oil spray. Sprinkle the tuna with the paprika.

Broil for 2 minutes. Turn the tuna over. Broil for 1 to 2 minutes, or until the tuna is the desired doneness.

Fluff the couscous with a fork. Spoon it onto the center of a serving platter. Place the tuna steaks on the couscous. Stir the lemon juice mixture; pour over the vegetables in the broiler pan. Stir. Spoon over the tuna steaks. Serve with the lemon wedges.

**Serves 4.** Per serving: 431 calories, 9 g total fat (1.5 g saturated fat, 1.5 g polyunsaturated fat, 5.5 g monounsaturated fat), 51 mg cholesterol, 342 mg sodium, 51 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 7 g sugar, 35 g protein

## Greek pasta salad

### Salad

- 12-ounce package dried tricolor rotini (4 1/2 to 6 cups)
- 1 1/4 cups frozen baby peas, thawed
- 1 cup diced red bell pepper (1 medium)
- 2/3 cup unpeeled seeded and diced cucumber (1/2 medium)
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced green onions (4 to 5 medium)
- 4 ounces crumbled feta cheese, rinsed

### Dressing

- 1/2 cup nonfat or low-fat cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup plain nonfat or low-fat yogurt
- 1/4 cup fat-free, cholesterol-free or light, reduced-calorie mayonnaise dressing
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions (green part only) (3 to 4 medium)
- 1 to 2 tablespoons finely snipped fresh dillweed
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

For salad, cook pasta using package directions, omitting salt and oil. Drain and put in large bowl. Stir in remaining salad ingredients. Set aside.

In a food processor or blender, puree cottage cheese, yogurt, mayonnaise and green onions.

Stir in dillweed and pepper, then combine with pasta mixture. Cover and refrigerate until chilled, about 30 minutes.

**Serves 8.** Per serving: 224 calories, 4 g total fat (2 g saturated fat, 0 g polyunsaturated fat, 1 g monounsaturated fat), 14 mg cholesterol, 271 mg sodium, 36 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 11 g protein

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idea. "Debra, you will be the secretary."

This happened almost two months ago. Since then, we have met every other Thursday at 6 o'clock in the Synergy Room at Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital. One of our guests was dietitian Rebecca Subbiah, who talked about the new food pyramid and told us there are no "bad foods" as long as we control portion size. She also gave us a tour of the local Food Lion store. I learned a of couple practical tricks (for example, don't go shopping when you're hungry, stick with your shopping list and use spices instead of salt or gravy).

Another guest, Stephanie Stazik, told us how much we should walk each day to lose weight and explained how much we walk in a typical day. She said that 10,000 steps a day sounds like a lot, but if you're smart, you can find a way to do it. For example, don't ask your child to get the mail; do it yourself. Or, on a rainy day, you can walk in the gym or at Wal-Mart.

Pat Partridge, a psychologist from Wake Forest University, taught us about the hunger scale, the association between emotions/stress and eating and how to deal with holidays and parties. Vicky Dinkins, a personal trainer, brought us to the Recreation Center at Elkin Municipal Park and showed us the machines, weights, balls and ropes that could get us started exercising. If you start slow and easy, you'll be surprised how much your muscle strength will improve within a few weeks.

Our next meeting will be on June 24. The guest speaker, Paul Gulley, M.D., will talk about diabetes and cholesterol problems. The meeting is free, and everybody is welcome. ♥

# heart

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# Your heart medicine

## Not taking as directed can be a prescription for trouble

IF YOU'RE A HEART PATIENT, YOU'RE PROBABLY TAKING several prescription medications that work together to manage your condition. At times, you may wonder whether you really need all those pills. After all, your blood pressure is under control—do you really need to take your blood pressure medicine?

Don't make the mistake of adjusting your healthcare provider's dosing instructions. Stopping your medication or changing how you take it can be dangerous to your health.

### TAMPER PROOF YOUR MEDS

Let's face it, medications can be expensive. They can cause unpleasant side effects. They require regular refilling and trips to the store. And, quite simply, it can be tough keeping track of them all.

But not complying with your prescription medication instructions—skipping days or cutting pills in half without your doctor's OK—can undermine any progress you've made at controlling your condition. Quitting blood thinners, for example, can increase your risk for clotting and make you a renewed candidate for a stroke.

Not only do you risk a health setback, you may also incur new, more serious problems. Studies have shown, for instance, that discontinuing statins can cause a rebound effect that triples your heart attack risk. And abruptly stopping beta-blockers can trigger chest pain or even a heart attack.

### ASK YOUR DOCTOR

If you're having a hard time with your medications, talk to your healthcare provider and be honest about your issues. Other drugs and drug combinations may be available that have similar benefits to those you're taking. And if your health status has changed, your doctor may be able to lower your dosages or tweak your prescriptions in other ways so taking your medication is an easier pill to swallow. ♥

# are you heart smart?



If you want to be heart healthy, you have to be heart smart. Test your knowledge by answering true or false to the following statements. Then check the answers below to see how well you did.

### QUESTIONS

1. If your blood pressure varies throughout the day, it's a sign that something is wrong.  
T  F
2. When it comes to fighting heart disease, a high-fiber diet isn't that important.  
T  F
3. *What* you eat is as important as *how much* you eat when it comes to preventing heart disease risk.  
T  F
4. An exercise electrocardiogram (ECG) effectively detects heart disease in both men and women.  
T  F

### ANSWERS

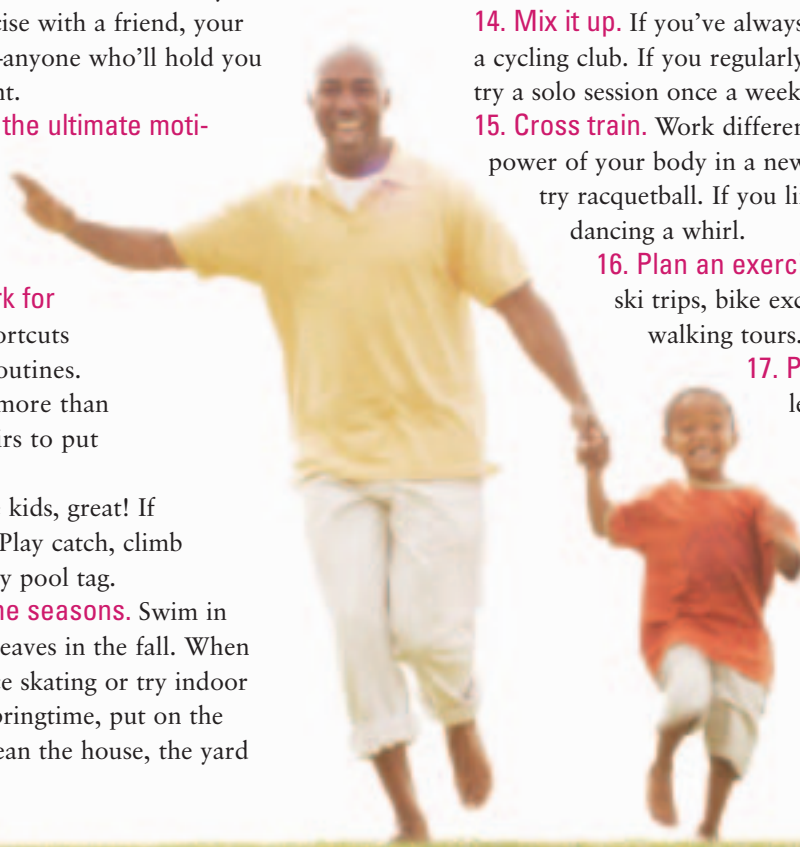
1. **False.** It's normal for blood pressure to vary throughout the day, increasing during activity and decreasing at rest. Cold weather, stress, medication, a medical checkup, getting startled and feeling threatened can also cause your blood pressure to rise.
2. **False.** A diet high in fiber may help control blood levels of C-reactive protein, or CRP, a sign of inflammation in the body and a risk factor for heart disease.
3. **True.** A low-calorie diet that's comprised mainly of sweets and fast food won't keep you healthy. Eat a low-fat, low-cholesterol, low-sodium diet that includes lots of fruits, vegetables and whole grains to reduce heart disease risk.
4. **False.** An exercise ECG—a test that measures the heartbeat's electrical activity while an individual walks on a treadmill—is not as accurate at detecting heart disease that involves only one clogged vessel, the kind that women usually have. Having the test performed along with other heart imaging technologies can improve the results' accuracy.

# 18 ways to make activity a daily habit



## IF YOU'RE JUST STARTING ...

- 1. Consider walking.** It's cheap (the price of a good pair of walking shoes) and easy to fit into your day.
- 2. Buy a pedometer.** This inexpensive gadget hooks to your waistband and counts your every step. Work your way up to 10,000 steps a day. Knowing every step counts keeps you aware of your goal.
- 3. Get fidgety.** Pace while you're on the phone, watching your kids' soccer game or waiting for the bus.
- 4. Go somewhere interesting.** Drive to a picturesque, walker-friendly area and enjoy some new scenery.
- 5. Schedule it.** Whatever your chosen activity, make an appointment with yourself to do it daily.
- 6. Buddy up.** Exercise with a friend, your spouse, your kids—anyone who'll hold you to your commitment.
- 7. Move to music, the ultimate motivator!** Download songs with fast beats into your iPod.
- 8. Make more work for yourself.** Avoid shortcuts in your everyday routines. For instance, take more than one trip up the stairs to put away the laundry.
- 9. Play.** If you have kids, great! If not, borrow some. Play catch, climb trees, jump rope, try pool tag.
- 10. Change with the seasons.** Swim in the summer. Rake leaves in the fall. When winter comes, go ice skating or try indoor volleyball. Come springtime, put on the work gloves and clean the house, the yard or the garage.



## IF YOU ALREADY EXERCISE REGULARLY ...

- 11. Reprogram your listening habits.** Instead of music, listen to a book on tape while walking.
- 12. Get better.** Take a private lesson or hire a personal trainer for some customized pointers.
- 13. Get competitive.** Take your sport to the next level. Sign up and train for a race or walkathon (many are for good causes). Join a local team; check your YMCA, YWCA or health club for leads.
- 14. Mix it up.** If you've always biked alone, check out a cycling club. If you regularly work out with a friend, try a solo session once a week.
- 15. Cross train.** Work different muscles and feel the power of your body in a new way. If you're a runner, try racquetball. If you lift weights, give ballroom dancing a whirl.
- 16. Plan an exercise vacation.** Consider ski trips, bike excursions, hikes and city walking tours.
- 17. Push harder.** Exercising at least 30 minutes or more on most days? Up your intensity or go longer. Mix in some yoga for flexibility or free weights for strength.
- 18. Reward yourself.** When you hit an exercise milestone, treat yourself to a new outfit, aromatic bath salts or a massage. ♥

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