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Improve your mood, help your heart

We know that heart disease and depression go hand in hand, but which comes first? New research shows that it could be either. Depression triggers inflammation, which promotes heart disease. But heart disease can develop from inflammation caused by nicotine or high blood sugar. Depression can then follow a diagnosis of heart disease and make the heart condition worse.

How can you avoid both? Invest in a pair of good walking shoes or a yoga mat. Research shows that activity not only

boosts your immune system and stops inflammation, but also jump-starts your body's natural "happy hormones," which function as painkillers and anxiety relievers.

And when you get up and move regularly, the activity helps lower your blood pressure and LDL, or bad cholesterol. It also raises your energy level and encourages the nerve cells in the brain to secrete neurotransmitters that can ward off depression, such as feel-good serotonin.

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{ NEWS AND TIPS FOR THE HEART-CONSCIOUS }



Low exercise capacity is bad news

People who have low exercise capacity when they walk on a treadmill are at increased risk of experiencing a heart event—such as a heart attack—or of dying from one, according to a study published in *Archives of Internal Medicine*. That's the conclusion drawn by researchers who conducted treadmill tests on nearly 9,200 adults, then followed them for more than two and a half years. Study subjects whose exercise capacity was lower than those who had normal exercise capacity had more than twice the risk of having a heart attack or chest pain or needing angioplasty or coronary artery bypass surgery. Low exercise capacity was more common in women and in those who also had conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

'Beet' high blood pressure

A diet rich in fruits and vegetables gives you plenty of antioxidants, and eating the right veggies may also lower your blood pressure. That's according to British researchers who found that healthy volunteers who drank 500 mL (about two cups) of beet juice experienced a drop in blood pressure in just an hour, with the peak drop occurring three to four hours afterward. The benefit lasted to some degree for as long as 24 hours. Authors of the study, published in the journal *Hypertension*, say their research indicates that consuming dietary nitrate contained in beet juice—and in green, leafy vegetables—causes the blood pressure decrease. In the past, a vegetable-rich diet's protective effects were attributed only to its antioxidant vitamin content.

A silent threat


An abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) is a weak, bulging area on the wall of the aorta, the body's largest artery. It's often found by accident. That's because most aneurysms have no symptoms. Your doctor may discover you have an AAA during a routine exam, for example, or as you're undergoing a CT scan for another reason. Aneurysms can be life threatening if they rupture. But an AAA diagnosis doesn't necessarily mean you'll be rushed into emergency surgery. Fortunately, most aortic aneurysms grow slowly and don't reach the rupture point. Many start small and stay small, but others expand over time. Your doctor will closely monitor your aneurysm so surgical repair can be planned if needed. In the meantime, treatment may depend on the aneurysm's size:

- **Small** (less than 4 cm)—You probably have no symptoms, but you may need to take a beta-blocker, a drug that reduces the force of blood being ejected from the heart. If you smoke, you'll need to quit. Your doctor also may prescribe a cholesterol-reducing drug.
- **Medium** (4 to 5.5 cm)—In addition to prescribing medicine, your doctor will discuss with you the benefits and risks of watching and waiting versus surgery.
- **Large** (more than 5.5 cm)—An aneurysm that's large, growing quickly, leaking or feeling tender or painful will probably need to be repaired with either surgery or a minimally invasive procedure.



► DID YOU KNOW?

- **Potassium—from food, not supplements—helps reduce salt's effect on blood pressure. A good source? Bananas.**
- **The higher your cholesterol level, the greater your heart attack risk.**
- **Cardiac rehab, a program that helps you get better after a heart attack, may help reduce your risk of dying from a heart attack by 20 percent to 25 percent.**



7 ways to rev up your metabolism and lose weight

We all know at least one person who can eat anything and not gain a pound. We chalk it up to a “fast metabolism.” But what exactly is metabolism, and can a slow metabolism be speeded up? Metabolism is the work your body does to turn the food you eat into energy. Even when you’re sitting perfectly still, you’re burning calories. Women burn about 1,200 to 1,700 calories a day and men burn about 1,400 to 2,100 calories a day at rest because simply breathing burns calories, as does the normal everyday functioning of your brain, heart, liver and kidneys.

The rate at which your body burns calories when you’re resting is called the “basal” or “resting” metabolic rate (BMR). People with a low BMR will tend to gain more body fat over time than someone with an average BMR. Factors that influence metabolism include heredity, age, body type and gender. If you’re overweight, it’s likely because you’re consuming more calories than your body burns.

TO HELP BOOST YOUR METABOLISM AND DROP THOSE EXTRA POUNDS:

1 Be active every day. When you move—like walking, running or dancing—your body burns calories well above the basal rate. But any aerobic activity that gets your heart rate up is good. And working out early in the day helps raise metabolism all day. Thirty minutes is adequate, 60

minutes is better if you’re trying to lose weight. Make it weight bearing, such as walking or running, and you’ll strengthen your bones as well.

2 Eat more frequently. Studies show that people who eat small, frequent meals tend to have a fast metabolism. Skipping meals slows down metabolism because without food your body will conserve energy and burn fewer calories.

3 Build muscle. People who have more muscle than fat generally have higher BMRs. Muscle is active tissue that consumes calories. The more lean muscle you have, the more calories you burn. Lifting weights two or three times a week can boost metabolism by as much as 15 percent.

4 Don’t be a chronic (and crash) dieter. Most diets don’t work, and people who cut their food intake too drastically can damage their body and actually cause their metabolism to slow down. Plus, you’ll be too tired to exercise.

5 Lose weight slowly. Set a realistic goal for weight loss. Experts say that one or two pounds a week is about right.

6 Eat your fruits and veggies. Not only will they provide healthy fuel for your body and help with weight control, they may reduce the risk of some cancers and chronic diseases.

7 Read the labels. Make your calories count. Nutrition facts can help you make smart choices about calories, fats, sugar and salt.



Menopause: A threat to your heart?

smoke at home or at work increases the risk even if you're a nonsmoker. No matter how long you've been smoking, your risk of heart disease drops rapidly when you quit.

- ▶ **Limit alcohol to one drink a day.** Moderate drinking may reduce bad cholesterol and prevent blood clots. But drinking three or more drinks a day can cause high blood pressure, stroke and heart failure. So, if you don't drink, don't start.
- ▶ **Get active.** Aim for 30 minutes of activity on most days of the week. Physical activity has proven benefits for your heart. And it reduces stress, anxiety and depression.
- ▶ **Eat a low-saturated-fat and high-fiber diet.** Emphasize fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Eat more fish and less meat and limit dairy.
- ▶ **Brighten your attitude.** The Normative Aging study suggests that people who are angry and hostile may be three times more likely to develop heart disease than those who are friendly.

GET ROUTINE CHECKUPS

- ▶ **Have your cholesterol checked yearly or more often as directed by your healthcare provider.** High blood cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease. Total cholesterol of less than 200 mg/dL is desirable, 200–239 mg/dL is borderline-high risk and 240 mg/dL and over is considered high risk.
- ▶ **Have your blood pressure checked on all routine office visits.** More than half of all women over 55 develop elevated blood pressure, which is another major risk factor for heart disease. Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm Hg. High blood pressure is 140/90 mm Hg or above.
- ▶ **Get screened for depression.** Untreated depression can raise your blood pressure by increasing stress hormones in the body. It also increases C-reactive protein, an inflammation marker that promotes heart disease.

ERR ON THE SIDE OF YOUR HEART

Women don't often experience crushing chest pain—the classic sign of a heart attack. Instead, their symptoms are often subtle. Women who experience one or more of the following symptoms should seek prompt medical care:

- ▶ pain in the chest, shoulder blade or upper back
- ▶ shortness of breath
- ▶ dizziness
- ▶ nausea and vomiting
- ▶ anxiety with a feeling of impending doom
- ▶ profuse sweating
- ▶ abdominal pain

You know about hot flashes, insomnia and other bothersome symptoms that can accompany menopause. But did you know that heart disease comes with the territory, too? Before menopause, women have a lower incidence of heart attacks and other heart conditions than men do because of their high estrogen levels.

Estrogen helps prevent high blood pressure by keeping your blood vessels open. It also raises HDL, or good cholesterol, which helps prevent plaque from forming in your vessels. But as women age, they produce less estrogen and their risk of heart disease starts to rise.

More than half of all deaths in women over age 55 are caused by cardiovascular disease. While replacing lost estrogen through menopausal hormone therapy was standard practice for many years, government studies have since shown that hormones don't offer the same heart protection they did at a younger age and may do more harm than good. The best way to keep your heart healthy as you age is to:

MODIFY YOUR LIFESTYLE

- ▶ **Quit smoking.** It's a major cause of heart disease in women. Secondhand

Learning to relax with yoga

Don't put away your hypertension medicine just yet, but Hatha yoga may help reduce your blood pressure, some studies suggest. At the very least, it can help you learn how to relax and better manage the stress that can affect your blood pressure.

It makes sense: Hatha yoga emphasizes relaxing into postures, along with slow, deep breathing. Other studies show that yoga may also counteract insulin resistance, promote weight loss, lower your heart rate and lower stress hormones—all heart-healthy benefits.

Hatha yoga, which focuses on specific postures, called asanas, as well as breath control and concentration, comes in a variety of different styles. Choose the style that best suits you. But before starting any yoga program, talk with your healthcare provider first.

Iyengar is a gentle form of hatha yoga that lets you use chairs, pillows, straps and blocks for support. It's great for people who've been inactive for a while.

Kripalu yoga focuses on intertwining poses with the breath. It's gentle and spontaneous, and the poses are held for only a short time.

Ashtanga, also known as power yoga, will give you a good cardio workout. It focuses on helping you develop strength and endurance and less on helping you meditate.



Mozart for the heart

The ancient Greeks believed that music could heal the body and soul. Today, researchers are looking for actual physical evidence to back up that claim. In a small study of critically ill patients, researchers found that music lowered both anxiety and blood pressure.

But they weren't satisfied with just looking at the numbers or seeing a more relaxed patient. Instead, they checked each patient's blood and found that music lowered blood chemicals that raise blood pressure and increased chemicals that naturally produce relaxation.

GO FOR BAROQUE!

What kind of music relaxes best? Mozart's piano sonatas and other baroque (ba-roke'), or classical style music, such as Bach, Handel or Hayden. Baroque tends to have rhythms in the 60–80 beats per minute range, about the same rate as the human heart. Other soothing music that may exert the same effects includes American Indian flute music or the music of alternative artists like Enya and Yanni.

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TRUE OR FALSE

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.

STATEMENTS

1. More men than women die from cardiovascular disease. T F
2. Drinking more than three alcoholic drinks a day can lead to heart failure. T F
3. Symptoms of high cholesterol include headaches and weight gain. T F
4. Chronic lung diseases, such as emphysema and asthma, can lead to heart failure. T F

ANSWERS

1. FALSE: More women die from cardiovascular disease than men. Part of the reason is women's symptoms of cardiovascular disease are subtle and so the condition is often diagnosed at a later stage. Although cardiovascular disease is the number one cause of death in women, half don't realize they're at risk.

2. TRUE: Drinking more than three alcoholic drinks a day directly damages your heart's muscle, causing it to become enlarged and weakened over time. This type of heart failure, called alcoholic cardiomyopathy, leaves the heart unable to contract forcefully enough to fuel the rest of the body with blood and oxygen.

3. FALSE: High cholesterol has no symptoms. Getting your blood tested is the only way to find out whether your cholesterol is high.

4. TRUE: Chronic lung diseases cause a type of heart failure called cor pulmonale (*cor-pul-mon-al'*).

Putting fruit on the menu

Finding a healthy balance when you have diabetes

If you have diabetes, you may sometimes be confused about when and if it's OK to eat fruit or drink fruit juice. Believe it or not, most fruits and their juices won't raise your blood sugar faster than any other carbohydrate, including rice and potatoes. In other words, 15 grams of grapefruit (about a half cup) raises your blood sugar at the same rate as 15 grams of melba toast (about 4 slices).

In fact, most fruits have a low glycemic index, the score used to rank carbohydrates according to how fast they raise your blood sugar, whether they're fresh, canned, dried or in juice form. And the benefits outweigh any risks: Fruits are often high in fiber and rich in antioxidant vitamins, magnesium, potassium and other phytochemicals that can reduce

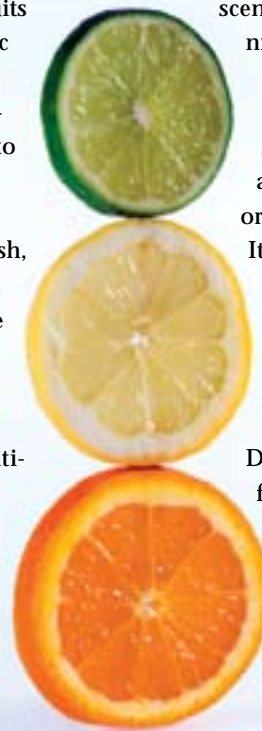
your heart disease risk.

Some fruit may taste sweeter at times. But this depends on your blood sugar level when you eat fruit, which depends on whether your stomach is full or empty and when you last took your diabetes medicine. Your challenge is to find out how fruit affects you. To do that, check your blood sugar one to two hours after you eat a piece of fruit. You may find that fruit in the afternoon will be enough carbohydrates to tide you over until dinner.

CHOOSE FRUIT WISELY

Shop seasonally when possible. Choose fruit that's uniform in color, size and shape. Avoid fruit that's bruised or has soft spots that could harbor bacteria. Don't shake fruit, such as melons, to determine their ripeness. Instead, feel and smell it. Fruit that's underripe is usually hard. Overripe fruit feels too soft. But fruit with a strong scent means it's ripening nicely.

Pay attention to serving size. One serving is equal to a half cup of cooked or raw fruit or juice. It's easy to go overboard. For instance, a large grapefruit is easily two or more servings. According to the American Diabetes Association's food pyramid, you need two to four servings a day, or one to two cups of fruit.





KEEPING THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

Good communication is key in developing and maintaining strong relationships with your healthcare team. The following tips can help keep communication lines open:

- ▶ Prepare for visits by jotting down your questions in a notebook.
- ▶ Keep a record of any symptoms you have or discomfort you're experiencing. Make a note of how your medicine did or didn't help you.
- ▶ Write down your medical history, current medications, allergies and who to contact in case of emergency.
- ▶ Take notes during your visit.
- ▶ Ask questions when you don't understand something. Don't hesitate to ask your healthcare provider to slow down and repeat the information in language you understand.
- ▶ Discuss drugs in detail, including possible side effects and how to deal with them.

Don't be afraid to call the office if you have a question that you forgot to ask or something new comes up. Your team wants to help.

Beating heart disease Who's on your healthcare team?

If you've been diagnosed with heart disease, your treatment will likely be guided by a number of experts and their helpers. Here's an idea of what your team may look like, the roles each member may play in your care and advice about how to communicate effectively with all your healthcare professionals:

- ▶ **Primary healthcare provider.** He or she is usually an internist, family physician or nurse practitioner who provides routine preventive care. This person usually remains the primary contact in charge of your overall care.
- ▶ **Cardiologist.** This physician specializes in medically treating all types of heart conditions. Your cardiologist will prescribe heart medications and may perform procedures to test whether your heart's arteries are narrowed or blocked.
- ▶ **Clinical nurse specialist.** An advanced practice nurse usually works under the guidance of a specific cardiologist or heart surgeon and helps monitor your care, orders lab tests and provides you with information, education and counseling.
- ▶ **Mental health professional.** A psychologist or psychiatrist helps you and your family deal with the emotional stress, anxiety or depression that may be linked to heart problems.

- ▶ **Social worker or nurse case manager.** The social worker or case manager offers guidance with complex financial, legal and other issues such as insurance coverage, as well as help in finding social support services.
- ▶ **Physical therapist and occupational therapist.** The physical therapist helps you get back on your feet, and the occupational therapist helps you regain your independence in performing everyday activities. Together, they assist with your cardiac rehabilitation program.
- ▶ **Pharmacist.** He or she coordinates all your medication and fills your prescriptions. Pharmacists are a valuable source of information about drugs, interactions and how to understand package inserts and label instructions.



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CARDIOLOGY



CATALIN BURCIU, MD
INTERNAL MEDICINE



ZUZANA R. BANAS, MD
INTERNAL MEDICINE



ANDRAS NEUMARK, MD
INTERNAL MEDICINE



TAMAS SOOS, MD
INTERNAL MEDICINE



RONDA BLEVINS, FNP
FAMILY MEDICINE



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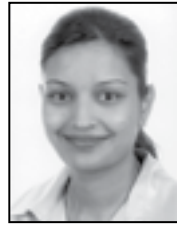
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INTERNAL MEDICINE



CRISTIN TRECROCE, DO
FAMILY MEDICINE



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INTERNAL MEDICINE



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INTERNAL MEDICINE



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