

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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Better Heart Health

How do you get a healthier heart, right now? By simply leading a healthier life.

Even small, steady changes in your life mean a stronger, more efficient heart. Studies have shown more than half of heart disease is preventable. Latest studies also show those who eat loads of veggies, fruit, whole grains, fish, and legumes; drink moderate amounts of alcohol; exercise; maintain a healthy weight; and don't smoke have significantly decreased their risk of heart disease.

February is Heart Disease Awareness Month, making this the perfect time to start improving your ticker -- and the rest of you.

Here are some tips to help you to strengthen and protect your heart right now.

Know Your Heart Health Numbers

Establish a baseline to help plan every preventive step for the rest of the year. You need to know if you are at risk before you can take action to lower your risk. Know your HDL or "good" cholesterol, LDL or "bad" cholesterol, total cholesterol, triglycerides, blood pressure, weight, and body mass index (BMI) numbers.



Target Your Triglycerides

Shoot for a level of 150 or lower experts say. Doctors usually talk about good and bad cholesterol and most folks will have that down, but triglycerides are a better marker for high risk of diabetes and heart disease. Triglycerides are also much more responsive to lifestyle changes than other types of blood fats. You can reduce your triglycerides just by reducing saturated fats and reducing your weight.

Take a Heart-felt Approach to Quitting Smoking

Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease, but kicking this nasty habit can be much easier said than done. If you smoke, talk to your doctor about some of the new therapies that are available. You start to improve your heart health within minutes of quitting.

After one year, your heart disease

risk is cut in half -- and after 10 years of not smoking, your heart disease risk is the same as for someone who has never smoked.

Strengthen Your Heart With Weight Training

Strength training reduces your percentage of body fat, keeps your weight down, and increases your muscle mass and endurance for

(Over)



Better Heart Health

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aerobic exercise. Do some weight training with free weights twice a week, making sure to focus on both your upper and lower body. As your aerobic capacity improves through strength training, your good HDL cholesterol levels will increase.

Measure Your Waist Size to Gauge Your Heart Health

The best way to make a dent in that spare tire? Get serious about being more active and get rid of simple sugar and white-floured foods in your diet, these foods tend to take up residence right around the middle.

Take a tape measure and measure your middle, if your waist size is more than 35 inches in women or more than 40 inches in men, this tells you that you are at increased risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Drink a Little Alcohol a Day to Keep Heart Disease Away

Experts say that alcohol may help the heart by increasing levels of HDL cholesterol however, more is not merrier. For women, up to one glass of alcohol a day and, for men, up to two glasses a day can help reduce risk of heart disease. Too much can cause high blood pressure, worsen heart failure, and cause heart rhythm abnormalities.

Reduce Your Blood Pressure by Reducing Your Salt

High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease, and reducing salt intake can help lower blood pressure. Cook with herbs in place of salt, and make

Benefits Corner

Reminder

As a reminder, the County Health Pool's coverage for impacted wisdom teeth removal is not covered under the CHP Dental Plan. The coverage for impacted wisdom teeth removal is covered under the CHP Medical Plan. Therefore, if your dependents are covered under the CHP Dental Plan and do not have CHP medical coverage, the benefit for impacted wisdom teeth removal would not be covered.

The impacted wisdom teeth removal benefit is covered in the CHP Medical Plan to allow a richer benefit and overall savings to the CHP members since the CHP Dental Plan has an annual maximum of \$1,500.

For additional information regarding the County Health Pool covered benefits and/or exclusions for both the medical and dental plans, please refer to the Plan Documents available at www.ctsi.org.



sure you read food labels to see just how much salt is in prepared foods. Aim for less than 2.3 grams [about a teaspoon] of salt per day, and when you are dining out, ask for the sauce and salad dressings on the side because restaurant food tends to be heavily salted.

Sleep to Your Heart's Content

People who sleep fewer than seven hours a night have higher

blood pressure and higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol, making the arteries more vulnerable to plaque buildup. In fact, the latest research shows that people who do not get enough sleep are more than twice as likely as others to die of heart disease. Try to avoid caffeine after noon, and develop a stress-free wind-down ritual before bed. Hint? Take a bath, and don't pay your bills right before bed.

Source: www.webmd.com

