

Nutrition News

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De'Shoin Friendship,
MPA, CFPP

Annrose Guarino,
PhD, RD

Heli Roy,
PhD, RD

Living “Heart Healthy” To Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease

Did you know that heart disease is our nation’s No. 1 killer? February is National Heart Month, and by following the American Heart Association’s ABC’s of preventing heart disease, stroke and heart attack, you can reduce your risk of these chronic diseases and improve your overall health.

ABC’s of Preventing Heart Disease, Stroke and Heart Attack

A — Avoid Tobacco

B — Be More Active

C — Choose Good Nutrition

Avoid Tobacco

Smoking will triple your risk of dying from heart disease. It decreases HDL (good) cholesterol and will increase blood pressure and the tendency for the blood to clot.

Be More Active

Obesity is the No. 1 factor for increasing your chances of chronic disease, so it is important to maintain a healthy weight. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends exercising 30 minutes a day, seven days a week to help prevent chronic diseases, such as heart disease and stroke. Walking briskly for three hours a week or exercising vigorously for 1.5 hours will reduce coronary heart disease risk in women by 30-40 percent. Becoming more active can also lower your blood pressure by as much as 4 to 9 points.

Choose Good Nutrition

Eating right is crucial to preventing heart disease as well as many other chronic diseases. The American Heart Association recommends a low-fat, low-cholesterol and low-sodium diet for a “heart healthy” lifestyle. Avoid high-fat foods, such as fried foods, fatty meats and cheeses, and breakfast pastries. Cholesterol can be found in animal products, like meat, poultry, fish, eggs, butter, cheese and whole milk. A low-sodium diet is associated with low blood pressure, so avoid processed foods, deli meats and cheeses, and foods prepared with salt to reduce your risk. Limiting alcohol and avoiding caffeine is also part of the “heart healthy” diet.

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For reducing the risk for heart disease, think about adopting these goals:

- Total cholesterol less than 200 mg/dL
- LDL less than 160mg/dL to 100 mg/dL, depending on your risk for heart disease
- Blood pressure less than 120/80 mmHg

You can do it by adjusting your baking recipes to reduce fat by one third without changing the properties of the baked product. Use apple sauce in place of some of the fat. Instead of deep-fat frying, try oven frying instead. You can get the same crispy exterior without all the fat. Use low-fat cheeses and mayonnaise when cooking or making sandwiches. Most people can't tell the difference. Always choose low-fat salad dressings instead of full-fat ones, and you can save about 50 to 100 calories a tablespoon. Drink non-fat milk or use non-fat or low-fat milk products. Dairy products and fruits and vegetables can help lower blood pressure. Prepare vegetables with little to no fat for maximum benefit.

For more information on living a "heart healthy" lifestyle, visit the American Heart Association's website at www.americanheart.org.

Source:

American Heart Association. ABCs of Preventing Heart Disease, Stroke and Heart Attack. Available at <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3035374#Limalcohol>. Accessed February 16, 2008.

Did you know?

According to the American Heart Association, women who maintain a desirable body weight, eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, do not smoke and consume a moderate amount of alcohol have an **84** percent reduction in their risk of cardiovascular disease.

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To find out more, contact your parish agent.