5 ways to protect your heart

Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the U.S. While some people are born with heart disease, keep in mind that there are many risk factors—from being overweight to high blood pressure—that can be controlled or modified through lifestyle changes or medications, reducing your chances of developing heart disease. Make 2020 your year to take steps to protect your heart! Step one: talk to your doctor about your personal risks. And consider these heart-healthy actions.

Strive for a healthy weight. Be physically active every day. Adopt the motto “move more, sit less.” Some ideas: set a reminder on your computer to get up and move for several minutes every few hours. Or, pace while talking on the phone. Be sure to include a regular exercise routine combined with a healthy diet to help achieve and sustain weight loss.

Choose nutrient-rich foods. Eat more fiber-rich fruits and veggies and fewer fatty, salty, sugary foods and servings of red meat. Limit alcohol, too!

Be heart-healthy—exercise!

Just like any muscle, your heart needs exercise. In fact, exercise is one of the best things you can do to improve the strength and efficiency of your heart. As a result, your heart becomes stronger and more efficiently pushes blood throughout your body with the help of your lungs. Regular exercise may help reduce your risk of heart disease by half! Try these tips to help you get started with, maintain, and maximize a heart-healthy exercise routine.

- Find the ideal workout option for you! Choosing something that you find enjoyable, fits within your lifestyle, and is appropriate for your fitness level and goals is beneficial for follow-through.
- Assess the effectiveness of your routine to ensure you’re getting the right kinds of exercise. Be sure to include cardio, resistance and balance exercises for a well-rounded workout. Don’t forget to warm up before you begin, and cool down afterwards.
- Understand your target heart rate to maximize your workout. Exercising at the correct intensity level can help you get the most out of your physical activity.
- Start your day in a healthy way with a quick workout that will get your heart pumping. Try activities like jumping jacks, mountain climbers, push-ups and squats.
- Keep it up! Maintain your motivation to exercise by sticking to a workout schedule and continuously setting goals.

Remember, any exercise is better than no exercise! Always talk to your doctor prior to beginning a new workout routine.
Getting along with others—even difficult people!

Misunderstandings are all too common in communicating with other people, especially when dealing with a headstrong know-it-all, a stoic, silent type, or some other personality you find frustrating. You may feel that you are not being heard or taken seriously, or that you are being attacked if the person holds views vastly different from yours. Try to keep your emotions in check and use these tips to help make your dialogue go more smoothly:

• **Really listen to the person.** And make eye contact, even if he or she is irritating.
• **Avoid being judgmental** and try to stay objective. Focus on the good and what they are doing right.
• **Show your respect** and that you are open to the person’s opinions. Avoid frowning, looking away or rolling your eyes if you don’t agree with someone’s opinion.
• **Don't dominate the discussion,** interrupt, or make speeches. Be patient and pause between your sentences, allowing others to collect their thoughts and express themselves.
• **Make comments that invite the other person to open up.** You might ask, “What do you think?” or “Does this make sense?”
• **Use “I” statements to frame your thoughts** and opinions, such as, “I’ve always found that…” which avoids putting the other person on the defensive.
• **If the dialogue is going in the wrong direction,** consider if you’re doing anything to antagonize the other person. Are you being fair?

If you consistently have trouble communicating with others, reach out to a Licensed Professional Counselor for guidance.

Heart Health Month

Learn your risk factors and how to take control of your heart health from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

Find out more: https://bit.ly/2R0MT3o

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