

- Better Sleep Month
- National High Blood Pressure & Stroke Awareness Month
- Women's Health

Did you know?

Eating garlic could help treat high blood pressure or stop it from setting in.

Potassium can help balance the level of sodium in your body.

Sleep deprivation was a factor in some of the biggest disasters in recent history: the 1979 nuclear accident at 3 Mile Island, the massive Exxon Valdez oil spill, and others.

Fatigue is a cause in 100,000 auto accidents a year in the U.S.

Lack of sleep can cause you to gain weight.

May 8-14 is Women's Health Week. Why not incorporate health at work:

- Organize a lunch-time walk with coworkers
- Encourage everyone to stand at your next meeting
- Host a healthy potluck or lunch-time salad bar
- Invite a local fitness instructor to teach a free yoga or zumba class
- Offer chair massages

It is thought that 40% of men and 50% of women are lower than the healthy level of Vitamin D recommended.

Mother's hold their children's hands for a short while, but their hearts forever.



Wellness Corner Connection

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High Blood Pressure: The *Silent* Killer

There is a stalker among us preying on millions of Americans who don't even realize they are potential victims. They go about their lives eating whatever they want, maintain a sedentary lifestyle and don't pay too much attention to getting regular check ups. So who is this sneaky assassin? Hypertension, commonly referred to as High Blood Pressure. The disease has few, if any, symptoms, therefore, many victims aren't even aware they have a problem until it's too late. If high blood pressure is not controlled, it can have life-altering consequences including stroke, heart attack, heart failure, kidney disease and even death.

How big a problem is high blood pressure in American and why should you care?

According to the American Heart Association:

- ♥ One out of every three (3) Americans has high blood pressure. This is HUGH!
- ♥ Nearly 20% of adult Americans are living with the disease and don't even know it.
- ♥ Only about half of the more than 76 million Americans diagnosed with high blood pressure are controlling it.
- ♥ It's one of the major risk factors for heart disease, the No. 1 killer worldwide.
- ♥ It's the leading risk factor of women's deaths in the U.S., and the second leading risk factor for death for men.
- ♥ One-third of American adults have high blood pressure. And 90 percent of American adults are expected to develop high blood pressure over their lifetimes.
- ♥ More than 40 percent of non-Hispanic black adults have high blood pressure. Not only is high blood pressure more prevalent in blacks than whites, but it also develops earlier in life.

Sodium is a mineral that's essential for life. It's regulated in the body by your kidneys, and it helps control your body's fluid balance. It also helps send nerve impulses and affects muscle function. But Americans are consuming far more sodium (Salt) on a daily basis than is necessary or safe. The average sodium intake for adults in America is over 3,400 mg per day, far above the minimal level required and more than double the recommended maximum limit for most people. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that everyone limit sodium intake to below 2,300 mg per day and that everyone should also get at least 4,700 mg of potassium a day to help balance their levels of sodium and potassium in the body.

So what can you do?

- Well you can start by not picking up the salt shaker.
- Spice up your food in healthier ways, maybe using lemon juice, balsamic vinegar or other spices or using far less or eliminating salt altogether from recipes.
- Limit your consumption of processed foods and eating out a lot. Up to 75% of the sodium in the average American diet comes from these two sources.
- Become knowledgeable about sodium. Your best ally is the Nutrition Facts Label on every product package.
- Take a look at the sodium content the next time you pick up a can of soup. Most will have enough sodium to nearly meet the recommended daily intake, and that's for ONE SERVING. Most canned soups have a serving size of two. How many of us only eat half a can?
- Look for products with the American Heart Association's Heart-Check Mark on the label. This red and white icon guarantees that the product meets the association's sodium requirement of less than 480 mg per portion.
- And when eating out, choose restaurants where food is cooked to order. And don't be embarrassed to ask your server about the sodium content of menu items. Specify that you want your dish prepared without salt. Bon appétit!



Are you getting enough Vitamin D? About 15 minutes of exposure to sunlight on your hands and face every day can make enough Vitamin D. Where we live...may not always be so easy.

Vitamin D seems to keep your **blood pressure low**, reduces inflammation and gives the immune system a boost. Also helps your bones absorb calcium.

Those most at risk for possible Vitamin D deficient : those spending a lot of time indoors and people with dark skin (dark skin absorbs less sunlight)

How does sodium affect your heart health?

When there's extra sodium in your bloodstream, it pulls water into your blood vessels, increasing the total amount (volume) of blood inside your blood vessels. With more blood flowing through your blood vessels, blood pressure increases. It's like turning up the water supply to a garden hose — the pressure in the hose increases as more water is blasted through it. Over time, high blood pressure may overstretch or injure the blood vessel walls and speed the build-up of gunky plaque that can block blood flow. The added pressure also tires out the heart by forcing it to work harder to pump blood through the body.



Understanding your BP Readings

Blood pressure (BP) is typically recorded as two numbers, written as a ratio like this:



High blood pressure

140/90 mmHg or higher

Prehypertension

between 120-139 mmHg
and/or 80-89 mmHg

Normal blood pressure

less than 120/80 mmHg

When your heart beats, it contracts and pushes blood through the arteries to the rest of the body. This force creates pressure on the arteries, known as systolic blood pressure. A normal systolic blood pressure **is below 120**.

A systolic blood pressure of 120 to 139 means you have prehypertension, or borderline high blood pressure. Even people with pre-hypertension are at a higher risk of developing heart disease.

A systolic blood pressure number of 140 or higher is considered to be hypertension, or high blood pressure.

The diastolic blood pressure number or the bottom number indicates the pressure in the arteries when the heart rests between beats. A normal diastolic blood pressure number **is less than 80**.

A diastolic blood pressure between 80 and 89 indicates prehypertension. A diastolic blood pressure number of 90 or higher is considered to be hypertension or high blood pressure.

Fabulous Foods That Help Fight High Blood Pressure

Blueberries:

Just one serving a week can help cut your risk of high blood pressure. Blueberries, as well as raspberries and strawberries, contain natural compounds called anthocyanins that protect against hypertension.

Cereal:

A bowl of whole-grain, high-fiber cereal like oatmeal, oat squares, bran flakes or shredded wheat, can reduce your chance of developing high blood pressure. Add blueberries and you just doubled your health rewards!

Potatoes:

Everyone loves a baked potato, right? But did you know that a baked potato is high in potassium and magnesium, two important minerals that can help fight high blood pressure? Research shows that if Americans boosted their potassium intake, adult cases of high blood pressure could fall by more than 10 percent. As for magnesium, many older Americans fail to get enough in their diet, according to the National Institutes of Health. So why not kill two birds with one food. In addition to baked potatoes, here are some other foods high in both these minerals: halibut, spinach, bananas, soybeans, kidney beans and plain nonfat yogurt.

Beet Juice:

Drinking a glass of beet juice can lower blood pressure within just a few hours. The nitrate in the juice has the same effect as taking a nitrate tablet. Beet juice can be found at some health food stores and specialty groceries such as Whole Foods. Other nitrate-rich foods include spinach, lettuce, cabbage, carrots and of course, whole beets!

Low Fat or Skim Dairy:

Eating low-fat dairy products can reduce a woman's risk of developing hypertension. That's the conclusion of a 2008 study of nearly 30,000 women with an average age of 54. The women who ate the most low-fat dairy products — yogurt, low-fat cottage cheese, frozen yogurt, skim or low-fat milk — were 11 percent less likely to develop high blood pressure.

Dark Chocolate:

One ounce square of dark chocolate can help lower blood pressure especially in people who already have it, according to Harvard researchers. Dark chocolate is high in flavonoids, natural compounds that cause dilation of the blood vessels. Look for chocolate with a high percentage of cacao. 50 to 70% is recommended. Personally I love the 95%!!

Stroke – there's treatment if you act FAST.



Every 40 seconds, someone has a stroke in the U.S., but 80% of all strokes can be prevented.

World Hypertension Day is May 17

Help achieve the international goal of 3 million blood pressure screenings. Have your blood pressure checked between April 17 and May 17. Then visit www.heart.org/hbp and click on the "I know my numbers" button to let us know you did your part.



Sea Salt or Table Salt...What's the Difference?

Sea salt is obtained directly through the evaporation of seawater. It is usually not processed, or undergoes minimal processing, and therefore retains trace levels of minerals like magnesium, potassium, calcium and other nutrients.

Table salt, on the other hand, is mined from salt deposits and then processed to give it a fine texture so it's easier to mix and use in recipes. Processing strips table salt of any minerals it may have contained, and additives are also usually added to prevent clumping or caking.

While some attributes may make sea salt more attractive from a marketing standpoint, Dr. Johnson, Ph.D., R.D., and American Heart Association spokeswoman, says there are no real health advantages of most sea salts.

"The minute amounts of trace minerals found in sea salt are easily obtained from other healthy foods," Dr. Johnson said. "Sea salt also generally contains less iodine than table salt. Iodine has been added to table salt since the 1920s to prevent the iodine-deficiency disease goiter." So the next time you find yourself choosing between kosher salt, sea salt and table salt, let your taste buds decide but keep in mind both **usually contain the same amount of sodium**.

Healthier Choices For Fast Food

Okay, let's face it. We all have to eat fast food once in a while. Whether you're on the road all day or dashing between errands, sometimes you have to make do with less-than-ideal choices when facing fast food options. If you're not careful, it's easy to consume tons of unnecessary calories with little nutritional value.

The best choice is always to plan ahead and pack a healthy lunch or snack when you know you'll be at the mercy of fast food. But sometimes that just can't happen. Navigating the food court (or drive-thru) doesn't have to be a nutrition disaster. A little knowledge goes a long way in choosing the best options. Here are some dietitian-approved choices at several popular fast food chains.



Burger King

Best Choice: Tendergrill Chicken Sandwich (hold the mayo)

Burger King also offers several options to keep you satisfied without going overboard on calories and artery-clogging saturated fat. Their Tendergrill Chicken Sandwich (without mayo) has 360 calories. Add a side salad with half a packet of Ken's Lite Honey Balsamic Dressing for just 100 calories.

Nutrient Breakdown: 360 calories, 6g fat (1.5g saturated fat), 36g protein, 1230mg sodium

Subway

Best Choice: The 6-Inch Roast Beef Sandwich on 9-Grain Wheat



Scan Subway's menu for healthier options (marked as "Fresh Fit" meals). One example we like: The 6-inch Roast Beef Sandwich* on 9-grain wheat bread. This standout has 310 calories and 24g protein. For a fat-free, 35-calorie side item, opt for apple slices. Adding apples also adds 2g fiber to your meal (7g total)—about 25 percent of the daily recommendation.

Nutrient Breakdown: 310 calories, 5g fat (1.5g saturated fat), 24g protein, 700mg sodium

*Sandwich shown on Italian bread. For more nutritional facts, visit subway.com.

Starbucks

Best Choice: Turkey and Swiss Sandwich with mayo

Many Starbucks stores offer nutritionally-sound snack and meal options. Their Turkey and Swiss Sandwich with mayo will fuel your shopping trip without weighing you down. This sandwich has 390 calories and 34g protein. Need a caffeine pick-me-up too? Add a tall skinny latte for just 100 calories, and you'll meet 35 percent of your daily calcium needs, too.

Nutrient Breakdown: 390 calories, 13g fat (4.5g saturated), 34g protein, 1180mg sodium

Taco Bell

Best Choice: Fresco Grilled Steak Soft Taco



Have you heard of the Drive Thru Diet? According to Taco Bell, "Eating Better Just Got Easier" and it has thanks to their "Fresco Menu." Each of these items have less than 9g of fat per serving and are moderate in calories. The Fresco Grilled Steak Soft Taco has only 160 calories and features carne asada steak wrapped in a flour tortilla with lettuce, tomatoes, and salsa.

Nutrient Breakdown: 160 calories, 4.5g fat (1.5g saturated fat), 11g protein, 430mg sodium

Chick-fil-A

Best Choice: Chargrilled Chicken Cool Wrap

Chick-fil-A's Chargrilled Chicken Cool Wrap features a multigrain flatbread wrapped with chicken, lettuce, cabbage, carrots, and tomatoes. While the wrap is slightly higher in calories, fat, and sodium than the traditional Chargrilled Chicken Sandwich, this has 7 grams of fiber and tons of veggies to keep you full and energized so you can keep shopping. The wraps are already flavorful so pass on the dressing.

Nutrient Breakdown: 410 calories, 10g fat, 4g sat fat, 32g protein, 1070mg sodium

Wendy's

Best Choice: Junior Hamburger and Kid's French Fry

When you decide to cave and go for a burger and fries because you just can't eat another wilted salad topped with rubbery grilled chicken and low-fat vinaigrette on the side, Wendy's has the solution for you. While they have other healthy options like apple slices, baked potatoes, low-fat chili, and yes, that grilled chicken topped salad, they also offer a lower calorie burger and fry options. Pass on the triple decker with cheese and opt for a Junior Hamburger for just 250 calories and the Value or Kid's French Fry for 230 calories.

Nutrient Breakdown (burger and fries): 480 calories, 21g fat, 6.5g sat fat, 18g protein, 790mg sodium

Manchu Wok (or other Chinese Fast Food)

Best Choice: Kung Pao Chicken

Large portion sizes and high sodium content are two things you may expect from fast food Chinese restaurants. The good news is that Chinese food can be healthful and delicious. Many Chinese dishes are packed with vegetables like broccoli, carrots, and bell peppers so opt for meals featuring these veggies, lean meat, and a small amount of sauce. Make sure to stay away from anything fried—you know the terms, crispy, battered, twice-cooked. Manchu Wok Kung Pao Chicken has 180 calories per serving and is low in saturated fat. Skip the rice and noodles and pair with mixed vegetables for a boost of fiber.

Nutrient Breakdown: 180 calories, 12g fat, 2g sat fat, 8g protein, 540mg sodium

Watch this quick video on ways you can make healthier choices on the go for Breakfast!

<http://www.cookinglight.com/eating-smart/nutrition-101/best-fast-food-breakfast>



Sleep Deprivation and Effect on Our Health

You know lack of sleep can make you grumpy and foggy. But did you know it has a huge effect on our memory, health, looks and even ability to lose weight. Here are some surprising and serious effects of sleep loss.

Sleepiness Causes Accidents:

Sleep loss is a big public safety hazard every day on the road. Drowsiness can slow reaction time as much as driving drunk. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that [fatigue](#) is a cause in 100,000 auto crashes and 1,550 crash-related deaths a year in the U.S. The problem is greatest among people under 25 years old. Studies show that sleep loss and poor-quality sleep also lead to accidents and injuries on the job. In one study, workers who complained about excessive daytime sleepiness had significantly more work accidents, particularly repeated work accidents. They also had more sick days per accident.

Sleep Loss Effects Cognitive Function:

Lack of sleep impairs attention, alertness, concentration, reasoning, and problem solving. During the night, various sleep cycles play a role in "consolidating" memories in the mind. If you don't get enough sleep, you won't be able to remember what you learned and experienced during the day.

Sleep Deprivation Can Lead to Serious Health Problems:

It can put you at risk for: heart disease; heart attack; heart failure; irregular heartbeat; high blood pressure; stroke; diabetes. According to some estimates, 90% of people with insomnia also have another health condition.

Sleepiness Is Depressing:

Over time, lack of sleep and sleep disorders can contribute to symptoms of depression. Insomnia has the strongest link to depression. A 2007 study of 10,000 people, those with insomnia were 5 times as likely to develop depression as those without.

Lack of Sleep Ages Your Skin:

Most have experienced sallow skin and puffy eyes after a few nights of missed sleep. But turns out that chronic sleep loss can lead to lackluster skin, fine lines and dark circles under the eyes.. When you don't get enough sleep, your body releases more of the stress hormone cortisol. In excess amounts, cortisol can break down skin collagen, the protein that keeps skin smooth and elastic. We need the deep sleep for the growth hormones to be released which is part of normal tissue repair, patching the wear and tear of the day.

Losing Sleep Can Make You Gain Weight

So maybe the old cliché "you snooze you lose" is true! Lack of sleep seems to be related to an increase in hunger and appetite, and possibly to obesity. In a 2004 study, people who got less than six hours of sleep were 30% more likely to become obese than those who slept seven to nine hours. Shortened sleep time: decreases the amount of Leptin, hormone that signals satiety to the brain and suppresses appetite; and it elevates Ghrelin, the hormone that stimulates hunger.

Source: WebMD

Recipe Corner

Quinoa Fiesta Enchilada Bake

Quinoa, black beans, corn, cilantro and green chiles covered with a quick homemade enchilada sauce and baked in the oven with cheesy goodness topped with avocado, cilantro and scallions.

This is perfect for **Meatless Mondays**!! You can make this ahead, then bake when ready to eat, and leftovers (without the avocado) are just as good as the day you made it which is perfect to pack for lunch. Plus, this is protein packed – over 17 grams per serving!

Ingredients:

- 1/2 tsp olive oil
- 1 clove crushed garlic
- cooking spray
- 1 1/4 cups quinoa, rinsed and drained
- 1 (8 oz) can tomato sauce
- 2 cups reduced-sodium chicken or vegetable broth*
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 tbsp chipotle en adobo sauce (or more if you want it spicy)
- kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 (4 oz) can diced green chiles
- 3/4 cup canned black beans, drained and rinsed
- 3/4 cup fresh or frozen thawed corn
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus 2 tbsp for garnish
- 1 1/2 cups part-skim shredded Mexican cheese blend, divided
- 1 medium (4 oz) haas avocado, diced
- 2 tbsp chopped scallions



Directions:

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Lightly spray a 9 x 12 baking dish with oil.

In a medium saucepan cook the quinoa with 1 3/4 cups broth according to package instructions; when cooked, fluff with a fork and set aside.

Meanwhile in a small saucepan heat the oil over medium low heat. Add the garlic and saute until golden, about 1 – 2 minutes. Add the tomato sauce, 1/4 tsp kosher salt, cumin, 1/4 cup broth and chipotle en adobo. If it's too thick, add 2 tbsp water to thin out. Bring to a boil and simmer 3 to 4 minutes.

In a large bowl combine the cooked quinoa, green chiles, corn, black beans and 1/4 cup cilantro. Stir in 1/2 cup of the cheese and mix well. Place into the baking dish and spread out. Top with the enchilada sauce and remaining cheese.

Cover with foil and bake until hot the cheese is melted, about 20 to 25 minutes. To serve, top with avocado, scallions and remaining fresh cilantro. Cut into 6 pieces and serve right away.

Servings: 6 • Size: 1/6th • Calories: 331 • Fat: 12 g • Carb: 44 g • Fiber: 7 g • Protein: 17.5 g • Sugar: 6 g
Sodium: 735 mg (without salt) • Cholesterol: 15 mg

Recipe taken from www.skinnytaste.com

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When you feel like quitting, think about why you started!