

Wellness Corner Connection

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American Heart Month

February Means Heart Disease Awareness!

Women and Heart Disease

The facts

The stats don't lie—heart disease is a major concern for women.

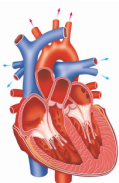
Women tend to develop cardiovascular disease 10 years later than men, making it more likely that they may have an accompanying disease that masks heart attack symptoms. Age also makes their chance of survival less likely.

When a heart attack does strike, women under 50 are twice as likely to die as men. The same holds true for bypass surgery, in which twice as many women die as men.

Over 1/3 of female adults have some form of cardiovascular disease.

Of the women who die suddenly from coronary heart disease (CHD), two-thirds may have no previous symptoms.

A heart attack strikes approximately every 34 seconds — and it doesn't care what gender you are.



Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. The month of February is dedicated to raising awareness about heart disease and increasing knowledge about prevention. Educate yourself on the dangers of heart disease and get on track to better heart health now!

A Powerful, Hard-working Muscle

The heart is the human body's hardest working organ. Throughout life it continuously pumps blood enriched with oxygen and vital nutrients through a network of arteries to all tissues of the body. To perform this strenuous task, the heart muscle itself needs a plentiful supply of oxygen-rich blood, provided through a network of coronary arteries. These arteries carry oxygen-rich blood to the heart's muscular walls (the *myocardium*). A heart attack (myocardial infarction) occurs when blood flow to the heart muscle is blocked, and tissue death occurs from loss of oxygen, severely damaging a portion of the heart.

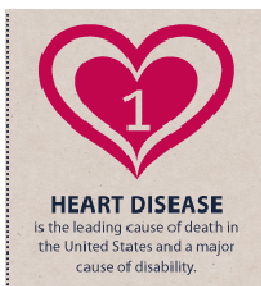
Heart Attack Symptoms

Heart attack symptoms can vary. They may come on suddenly and severely or may progress slowly, beginning with mild pain. Symptoms can also vary between men and women. Women are less likely than men to have classic chest pain, but they are more likely to experience shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting, or jaw and back pain. (see side bar)

Common signs and symptom of heart attack include:

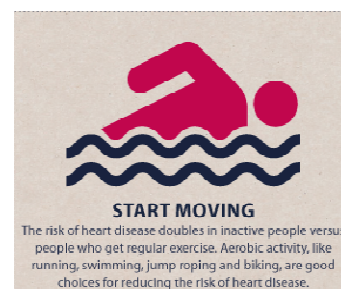
- **Chest pain.** Chest pain or discomfort (angina) is the main sign of a heart attack. It can feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of the chest. Patients with coronary artery disease who have stable angina often experience chest pain that lasts for a few minutes and then goes away. With heart attack, the pain usually lasts for more than a few minutes and the feeling may go away but then come back.
- **Discomfort in the upper body.** People having a heart attack may feel discomfort in one or both arms, neck, back, jaw, or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath** can occur with or without chest pain.
- **Nausea, vomiting, lightheadedness** or breaking out in a **cold sweat**.

BE IN THE KNOW



Research suggests that morning heart attacks are also most serious (between 6am and noon). The study was the first to link circadian fluctuations to heart attack severity in humans.

The study, conducted by Dr. Ibanez for Spain's National Center for Cardiovascular Research, also showed that the fewest heart attacks occurred between midnight and 6am.



Fat Cells—Heart Disease, Diabetes, Fatty Liver

Have you ever been on a diet that claims to “**eliminate fat cells**”? Well guess what? They lied! Eliminating fat cells is IMPOSSIBLE! The number of fat cells we have were determined throughout our childhood and adolescence. By the time we reach 20 years old, our genetics and how much we consumed as a child has given us all the fat cells we are going to have. Most people have the same number of fat cells throughout their entire life. When we gain weight or lose weight we don't lose fat cells, they just change in size. Typically we store fat based on the sex hormones estrogen and testosterone. Therefore, men tend to carry body fat in their chest and abdomen producing the “apple” shape. Women tend to carry fat in their breasts, hips, waist and buttocks creating a “pear” shape.

Many of us, as we get a little older, tend to believe that the “**middle-age spread**” is inevitable. As we approach our middle years, the ratio of fat to body weight tends to increase especially for women. The extra pounds tend to park themselves right around our waistline. As our waistline grows, so does our health risks. Abdominal or visceral fat (also referred to as *deep fat*) is more of a health concern than subcutaneous (adipose) fat which is just below the skin and typically can pinch with your fingers. Visceral fat lies out of reach and fills in the spaces between and around your organs. This can be an issue even if you are thin. It has been linked to metabolic disturbances and increased risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. It can even lead to a term we have been hearing more and more about “Fatty Liver”.

According to Harvard Medical School, it is not certain but perhaps as many as 20% of American adults have some degree of **fatty liver disease**. This used to be a condition that occurred exclusively in heavy drinkers. The epidemics of obesity and diabetes are to blame. Fatty liver affects between 70% and 90% of people with these conditions. As you may recall from past discussions of diabetes, insulin is needed for glucose to enter cells for energy. If someone is insulin resistant, it means their muscle, fat and liver cells do not respond properly to insulin and thus cannot easily absorb glucose from the bloodstream. As a result, the body needs higher levels of insulin to keep glucose under control. The pancreas will continue to pump out excess insulin in an attempt to overcome the resistance, eventually wearing out the pancreas and resulting in type 2 diabetes. But while this is happening, there is also an increase in the amount of free fatty acids circulating in the blood. Fatty liver disease occurs when some of those fatty molecules accumulate inside liver cells. It can lead to inflammation in the liver and damage surrounding liver tissue.

Once that happens, if excess alcohol is not involved, the condition is called **nonalcoholic steatohepatitis** (*steato-* for fat and *-hepatitis* because the liver is inflamed). Fortunately, that unwieldy name boils down to a handier acronym, NASH. Estimates vary quite a bit, but it seems that 5% to 10% of people with fatty liver disease go on to develop NASH. NASH is often a relatively stable, low-grade condition that people live with for years, with few if any symptoms. But it can also start a cascade of serious damage to the liver and attempts by the organ to regenerate itself that culminate in an abundance of scar tissue and impaired liver function — **a condition called cirrhosis**. Cirrhosis is irreversible and can lead to total failure of the liver. It also is associated with an increased risk for developing liver cancer.

To learn more, go to Harvard Health Publications. Harvard Medical School.
“Abdominal fat and what to do about it” (Oct 2015) and “When the liver gets fatty.” (Jan 2011).

**Do you know
YOUR numbers?**



Do you know the heart health numbers that could literally save your life? There are three key numbers you need -- including one surprisingly easy one that could give you a lifesaving preview of your cardiac risk.

1. Your blood pressure
2. Your cholesterol levels
3. Your waist size

Don't wait until it's raining to get the roof fixed!!! Make the effort to get your screenings now. Check with your physical to determine what is “normal” for YOU.

For more details on the ranges in which these numbers should be, visit:
<http://www.webmd.com/heart/features/do-you-know-your-heart-numbers>

Heart disease is often preventable. Follow this advice to help keep your heart healthy:



Get regular checkups. Assessing your blood cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure are the most common first steps toward getting an idea of the health of your heart. Based on the results, your doctor may decide to do further tests.

Stay smoke-free. Smoking may be associated with heart attacks even in younger women. Within three years of quitting, the risk of heart attack for former smokers is the same as it is for lifetime non-smokers.

Lose weight. A lower body weight can lead to lower cholesterol and blood pressure levels, as well as reduce your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, a disease which increases the risk of heart attack or stroke.

Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables. A diet high in fruits and vegetable has been linked to lower blood pressure and a reduced risk of heart disease.



Consume less fat. In addition to lowering your total intake of fat, focus especially on reducing the amount of saturated fat you eat. Saturated fats are mostly found in animal products, including meat, butter and lard.

Get moving. We all know exercise is good for us, but how good is it? Among other things, getting active can lower blood pressure and reduce triglycerides, a form of fat present in your bloodstream. Exercise also helps improve endothelial function (related to the inner lining of blood vessels) and may help keep the vessels dilated.

Laughing can be a great workout for your heart. Whenever you laugh, the blood flow in your heart is increased for up to 45 minutes, which in turn improves your heart health.



Healthy Heart = Healthy Brain

Research published in the Archives of Neurology suggests that people with low levels of “good cholesterol”, or High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, may

be more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. HDL levels can be increased through losing weight, exercising, quitting smoking and eating healthier fats.



Spice it Up and Improve Heart Health

Regardless of whether they are dried or fresh, herbs and spices have wonderful health benefits. If you're trying to prevent heart disease or simply preparing a heart-friendly meal, try to add these herbs and spices in whenever you can.

1. Garlic: Whether raw or ground, no one can deny the healing powers of garlic. If you buy garlic powder though, make sure it is pure with no other ingredients added to it, especially salt. This spice has antioxidants and is used in thinning blood, making it an effective remedy for those with high cholesterol.

2. Cinnamon: Although this is used to add flavor to coffee and pies, cinnamon is actually quite useful in the kitchen. Add this to your dishes to help lower your blood sugar levels, while improving your insulin sensitivity. Cinnamon also has antioxidants that help remove toxins in the body.

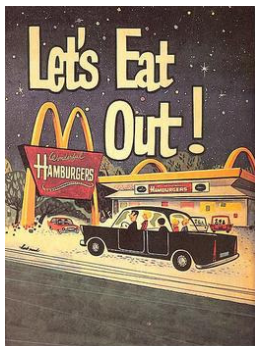
3. Onion: Lower your blood pressure by adding onions to your meals. Aside from that, onions can reduce the unhealthy fats found in your blood. Onions also prevent blood clotting and can also lower your blood sugar, which is why it is popular to diabetic patients as well as those with heart diseases.

4. Ginger: Ginger also acts like garlic, which can help thin the blood. In most places, ginger is used to help digestion and other tummy problems. It can also treat nausea for patients who take morphine or codeine. When it comes to aiding the heart, it is considered an anti-inflammatory spice and can help relax the blood vessels.

5. Turmeric: A distant cousin of ginger, turmeric is very popular because of its health benefits that it owes from curcumin. This spice is used for curry powder, giving it its distinctive color. Meanwhile, curcumin is a compound that has several healing powers. Some researchers believe that it can cure arthritis and even prevent Alzheimer's disease. Turmeric is a heart-friendly spice that can prevent blood clotting and lower blood pressure. It can also raise good cholesterol levels by up to 30%.



Herbalists recommend sipping sage tea for upset stomachs and sore throats; one study found that spraying sore throats with a sage solution gave effective pain relief. And whoever gave the herb the wisdom-connoting "sage" moniker may have been onto something: preliminary research suggests the herb may improve some symptoms of early Alzheimer's disease by preventing a key enzyme from destroying acetylcholine, a brain chemical involved in memory and learning. In another study, college students who took sage extracts in capsule form performed significantly better on memory tests, and their moods im-



Think about your portions

- Ask for a half-size portion of the meal. Or ask if the restaurant offers lunch-sized portions, which tend to be smaller.
- At fast-food restaurants, choose the smallest-size meal option instead of "super-sizing."
- If you enjoy leftovers, try putting half of your meal in a to-go box. Ask your server to bring the box with your meal, so that you can split the meal before you even take the first bite.
- Try splitting a meal with someone else at your table.
- Avoid all-you-can-eat menu options and buffet-style restaurants. Unlimited refills of soup or pasta may sound like a good deal, but they can make it easier to overeat.
- Before you order, find out how the food is prepared. Foods that are broiled, poached, grilled, baked, or steamed tend to be lower in fat than foods that are fried. Limit foods that are breaded or that come with cream sauce or gravy.
- Ask to have butter, sour cream, gravy, dressings and sauces served on the side.
- Choose reduced-fat salad dressings. Or choose oil-and-vinegar salad dressings instead of creamy dressings.
- Order hamburgers and sandwiches without the high-fat extras, such as cheese and bacon.
- Choose leaner deli meats such as turkey or roast beef rather than salami or bologna.
- Order extra vegetables on pizzas and sandwiches.
- Substitute vegetables or a baked potato for french fries. At fast-food restaurants, ask if you can have a salad or fruit instead of french fries.
- If you want dessert, look for low-fat frozen yogurt, sorbet, fruit ice, or sherbert





Heart Facts

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, I thought it would be interesting to share some "Fun facts" about the heart. But learning these facts can be more than mere entertainment. These facts will also educate you on just how amazing the heart is and why it's so critical we help our own stay strong and continue working properly.

- ♥ The heart weighs less than one pound. The average weight for women is eight ounces and for men, 10 ounces.
- ♥ Your heartbeats with enough strength to shoot blood a distance of 30 feet.
- ♥ Your left lung is smaller than your right one to make room in your chest cavity for your heart.
- ♥ On average, a million barrels worth of blood is pumped through the heart in a lifetime.
- ♥ Every year, your heart beats approximately 35 million times. That is 100,000 beats per day and 70 beats per minute. Over the course of a lifetime, that adds up to an average of 2.5 billion heartbeats.
- ♥ Your heart is made up almost entirely of muscle. It is strong enough to lift approximately 3,000 pounds – roughly the weight of a compact car.
- ♥ The blood vessels fed by your heart are more than 60,000 miles long. According to The Cleveland Clinic, they could wrap around the world twice.
- ♥ Clench your fists and put them side by side. This is roughly the size of your heart. A child's heart is approximately the size of a clenched fist on an adult hand.
- ♥ Women's hearts beat faster than male hearts.
- ♥ Morning is peak time for heart attacks. The majority of heart attacks happen during the hours of 8 and 9 in the morning. Most heart attacks happen on Mondays.
- ♥ For men, there is a strange link between the ring finger and the heart. According to scientific studies, the longer a man's ring finger is, the lower his chance of having a heart attack.
- ♥ You really can have a "broken heart." When you experience an emotionally difficult event, like a death of a loved one or the end of a romantic relationship, your body releases stress hormones. These hormones can sometimes cause symptoms similar to those of a heart attack. In some cases, these hormones can cause an actual heart attack.

Recipe Corner

ALMOND JOYFULS

This is a great Valentine's Day Sweet for your sweetie! And it's MUCH healthier version of an old favorite!

Prep Time: 10 minutes

"Cooking" time: 30 minutes in the refrigerator—no cooking!

Yields 12 to 15 pieces.

Ingredients:

2 cups unsweetened shredded coconut
2 tablespoons Ghee* or vegan butter substitute
3 tablespoons brown rice syrup
scant pinch sea salt
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
2 cups dark chocolate morsels (Ghirardelli 60% cacao)

Note*: Ghee is clarified butter and can be purchased at most supermarkets in their Natural/Organic section.



Directions:

Place all ingredients **except chocolate** in a food processor and pulse until a sticky mixture forms that hold together.

Line a baking sheet with parchment. Use a melon baller or a tablespoon to scoop coconut mixture onto parchment. Press an almond onto top of each scoop of coconut. Chill in refrigerator for 30 minutes (or longer).

When coconut is firm, temper the chocolate. Melt 1 1/2 cups of chocolate in a double boiler or glass bowl over a pan of boiling water and stir until chocolate melts and reaches 119 degrees. Remove from heat (do not let water get in chocolate).

Stir in the remaining chocolate until it is smooth and temperature reduces to 85 degrees.

Spoon chocolate over each coconut almond mound and chill to set the chocolate.

Enjoy your Almond Joyfuls!

Recipe from Christina Cooks—<https://www.christinacooks.com/recipes/almond-joyfuls>

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