West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services

Food and Fitness

Volume 143 February 2014

Happy Valentines Day!

Websites of interest:

- heart.org
- oldwayspt.org
- soyconnection.com
- everybodywalk.org

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Heart Disease—Still An Unsolved Mystery

You already know a lot about heart disease. It continues to be the number one killer of Americans. Known risk factors include:

- High LDL or bad cholesterol
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Uncontrolled diabetes
- Uncontrolled hypertension

- Obesity
- Poorly managed stress

But have you ever known someone who has none of these risks yet still had a heart attack, stent or bypass surgery? Or someone who has all these problems and no heart disease? Of course you have! Doctors don't know all the answers yet.

Researchers refer to the "unknown" or questionable risk factors as "emerging risk factors" or "non-traditional risk factors" for heart disease. Some of these "unknowns" may include:

- C-reactive protein

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Mediterranean Diet—Enhanced

If you are looking for a dependable diet to prevent heart disease check out the Mediterranean diet.

This diet is based on the way people ate in the regions bordering the Mediterranean sea in the 1950's and 60's.

Characteristics of this diet include:

- High use of olive oil

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Heart Disease—Still An Unsolved Mystery

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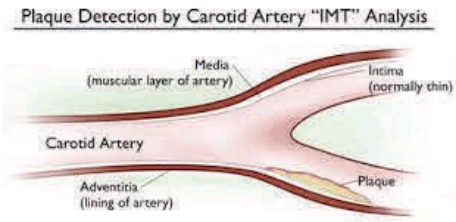
- Leukocyte count
- Oxidized LDL cholesterol
- LDL particle size
- Periodontal disease
- Carotid Intima-Media thickness
- Pre-Diabetes
- Homocysteine



If your doctor hasn't ordered these tests for you it doesn't mean he has dropped the ball. For C-reactive protein, leukocyte count, and homocysteine levels research hasn't shown that improving these levels will indeed protect your heart. More research needs to be done.

C-reactive protein and leukocyte elevations may signal inflammation throughout the body. Inflammation may cause damage to the heart's arteries. This can set the arteries up for the development of atherosclerotic fatty plaque.

Oxidation of LDL cholesterol (a process likened to the process of rusting) has been thought of as more important than merely having an elevation in LDL cholesterol numbers. Protection from oxidation with anti-oxidant nutrients from foods could be important.

The LDL particles (the actual particles which carry LDL cholesterol) could be more harmful than the cholesterol they carry. Size may also matter. Small dense LDL particles are considered to be more harmful than large fluffy particles.

As many as 75% of adults in the US have periodontal disease, an inflammation of gums resulting in tooth loss. There is an association between extensive tooth loss from periodontal disease and having coronary heart disease.

Thickening of the layers of the carotid artery may indicate disease in the heart's arteries as well. This measure can be done non-invasively with ultrasound.

Pre-Diabetes is the condition in which blood sugar levels are above normal (100-125) but not high enough to be classified as Diabetes (126 or above). Pre-Diabetes has not yet been identified as a strong predictor for heart disease but is a predictor of having diabetes, a known risk for heart disease.

Homocysteine is an amino acid (protein component) that is often elevated in people with heart disease. It cannot be classified as a true risk because reducing this level does not clearly reduce heart disease risk.

The American Heart Association offers reasonable doable guidelines for heart health at heart.org. Topics include:

- Healthy diet such as the Mediterranean diet
- Tips for exercise
- Tools for managing stress

Mediterranean Diet—Enhanced

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- High use of fruit, nuts, vegetables, and whole grains
- Moderate intake of fish and poultry
- Low intake of dairy products, red meats, processed meats and sweets

- Wine in moderation, consumed with meals.

The Lyon Diet Heart Study published in the Lancet in 1994 tested a Mediterranean style diet, fortified with a margarine enriched with fats similar to those found in olive oil and walnuts (oleic acid and alpha lenolenic acid).

Approximately 300 subjects tested this eating style against 300 subjects consuming a typical AHA Step 1 "prudent heart" diet, low in saturated fat and cholesterol. The Mediterranean enhanced diet demonstrated that this eating style could reduce risk of second heart attacks by 50-70% and more so than the other study group.

The PREDIMED diet trial published in The New England Journal of Medicine in April 2013 examined the effects of variations to the Mediterranean diet on the occurrence of heart events or death. Participants included 7447 subjects without heart disease who were at risk because of obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes, and hypertension. They were divided into three groups with three different diets:

- Mediterranean diet plus increased amount of extra virgin olive oil (at least 4 Tbs.)
- Mediterranean plus one ounce of mixed nuts

(walnuts, hazelnuts, and almonds)

- Low fat diet with minimal oils or nuts

After 4.8 years it was found that subjects following both of the enhanced Mediterranean diets equally experienced lower risk of heart events or death by 30% compared to the subjects following the low fat diet. None of the groups lost or gained any significant amount of weight.

Just Do It!

The latest news from the American Heart Association (AHA) may sound like old news to you! Exercise is paramount for your heart's health!

In fact new AHA guidelines provide an overview of the medical benefits of exercise training. Of note is that exercise is equated with a preventative treatment like a prescriptive pill. And this "pill" should be taken a minimum of 5 days per week .

A recent article in *The Lancet* advocated that a prescription of physical activity is as important as a drug prescription. Additionally, sedentary lifestyle is among the five major risk factors for heart disease listed by the AHA. The others are high blood pressure, abnormal blood cholesterol, smoking, and obesity.

In *Exercise and Cardiovascular Health*, Jonathan Myers, PhD, stresses the favorable effect of regular exercise on cardiovascular risk factors. Exercise can:

- reduce LDL (bad) cholesterol
- raise HDL cholesterol
- promote weight loss
- reduce blood pressure
- help to control blood sugar in diabetes.

Jordan Metzl, M.D, a sports medicine physician and author of *The Exercise Cure* refers to exercise as a magic pill. It's a pill that is safe, free, and readily available to treat and prevent chronic disease.

Robert Sallis, M.D., past president of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), calls lack of fitness a public health epidemic of our time. Dr. Sallis also refers to exercise as a wonder drug for many of today's most common medical problems.

The American College of Sports Medicine released its 2014 Fitness Resolution in December 2013. The resolution is called "Every Body Walk!". Explore this further:

everybodywalk.org.

Research continually supports recommendations for increasing physical activity. A study cited in the December 19, 2013 journal The Lancet confirmed reduction of heart disease risk by walking in adult subjects with pre-diabetes.

In 9,300 subjects the

average number of steps taken per day was recorded at the start of the study and

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Just Do It!!

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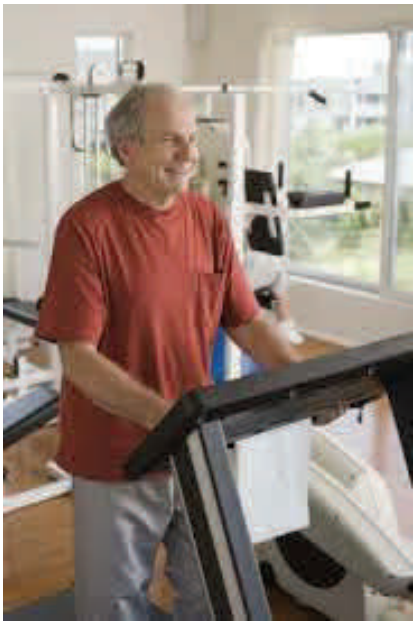
again after 12 months. Increasing the amount of walking over 12 months was found to decrease the



risk for heart disease. For every 2,000 step increase in walking above the initial amount walked, there was a 10% lower risk for heart disease.

Dr. Thomas Yates, the study leader, noted these benefits occurred regardless of body weight or beginning level of activity. Yates concluded his findings provided the strongest evidence yet for the importance of physical activity in high risk populations.

If you have heart disease, a recently released study by Johns Hopkins found an association between greater exercise capacity and reduced risk of complications from heart disease. Researchers used data from more than 9,800 adults with heart disease.

These subjects were followed for 11 years.

What can you do to achieve or maintain a healthy heart? The AHA's new guidelines indicate 40 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise 3-4 times a week is enough to limit the risk for most people. This can be as simple as brisk walking.

How do you know if your walking is moderate or vigorous or brisk? It should feel somewhat hard, but allow you enough breath to talk in phrases.

If you don't have a regular exercise program heed these suggestions after checking with your doctor:

- Start slowly with short distances.
- Walk several times daily and gradually increase your time and distance until you can walk for 30 -40 minutes continuously, OR
- Accumulate 30-40 minutes using short walks throughout the day to reap significant benefits.

The AHA recommends walking for 30 minutes 5 days per week. If the weather is not cooperating, use a treadmill, visit your local senior center, or walk in a shopping mall!

Chocolate!

Chocolate—it has been touted as a weight loss aid, a brain food and the next cure for heart disease! While there have been scientific studies to support all these claims don't go out just yet and spend your life savings on creamy milk chocolate bars and valentine bonbons!

The "old folks" used to say if something ails you just "take a powder" . Interestingly, with regard to chocolate, it's the flavanols in the non-fat, unprocessed, bitter-tasting cocoa powder portion of the cocoa bean that bestows the magic we seek.

When the cocoa bean is processed by roasting, fermenting, or processing with alkali little of the benefits remain. Then to improve the bitter flavor we add the cocoa butter, sugar and milk to make the sweet milk chocolate candy bars and delicacies we have grown to adore and crave. Add it up—lots of calories with no magic.

The magic lies in the flavanols in the cocoa bean. Researchers have noted improvements in blood pressure, blood fats, and inflammation after ingesting flavanols from chocolate.

Specifically, the greatest benefit may be cocoa flavanols' effect on the body's arteries. Kevin Monahan, a researcher from Penn State College of Medicine reported on a study published in a 2011 Journal of Applied Physiology that ingesting approximately 200 mg of flavanols from cocoa releases nitric oxide, which helps arteries relax or dilate. Artery dilation and blood flow improvement are basic in preventing heart disease.

So forego the truffles and "take a powder" instead! Two tablespoons of an unsweetened pure cocoa powder (such as Hershey's unprocessed) will provide the 200 mg of flavanols. This amount supplies only 20 calories as opposed to the 320 calories or more from a 2 oz. dark chocolate candy bar.

Adding cocoa powder to coffee or milk for mocha or hot chocolate would be quick and easy. Stirring some into yogurt or peanut butter can make a good treat taste even better!

Or, you could make a low-fat brownie or elegant but light chocolate meringue dessert such as the ones featured in this month's recipe corner.

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Recipe Corner

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Romantic Dinner for Two:

Petite Pork Tenderloin

Garlic Mashed Sweet Potatoes

Tossed Greens with Vinaigrette Dressing

Chocolate Meringues with Cocoa Topper and Raspberries

Petite Pork Tenderloin

1 pork tenderloin, about 12 oz.

Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350°. Prepare meat by seasoning lightly with salt and black pepper. Place in uncovered roasting pan and bake for about 50 minutes, until meat thermometer registers at least 145°. Remove from

oven and let cool five minutes before slicing. Garnish with fresh herbs.

Garlic Mashed Sweet Potatoes

(Back by popular demand!)

1 large or two medium sized

fresh sweet potatoes

2 cloves fresh garlic, roasted

1/3 cup skim or soy milk

Roast potatoes in 350 degree oven for about an hour, until tender. Remove peelings and mash by hand.

Add roasted garlic and blend well.

Next add milk gradually. For this final step, you may use an electric mixture for about one minute.

Tossed Greens with Vinaigrette

1 small bag mixed salad greens

½ cup sliced fresh strawberries

Two teaspoons fresh Italian parsley, chopped

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Recipe Corner

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Jeff's Vinaigrette

3 Tablespoons Olive Oil

1 Tablespoon Balsamic or Red Wine vinegar

1 clove garlic, minced

½ teaspoon dry yellow mustard

Mix greens with berries and parsley in a salad bowl. Prepare vinaigrette by mixing all ingredients together with a wire whisk. Dress lightly—you may not need it all for just two servings. The remaining dressing keeps well in refrigerator if covered.

Chocolate Meringues with Cocoa Topper and Raspberries

Start this one early! About 4 hours prep time.

Meringue

1 egg white

1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar

¼ teaspoon vanilla

1/3 cup powdered sugar

2 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder

Allow egg white to stand at room temperature for 20 minutes. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or foil and set aside.

Preheat oven to 200°. In a medium bowl combine egg white, cream of tartar and vanilla. Sift together powdered sugar and cocoa powder; set aside.

Beat egg white mixture using electric mixer until soft peaks form. Add sugar mixture gradually, and beat on high speed until stiff peaks form.

Spoon dollops of egg white on paper, forming three inch circles. Using the spoon, form indentations to resemble a cup. Bake 1 ½ hours. Turn off oven and let meringues dry with door closed for 2 hours. Lift off paper and transfer to cooling rack.

Cocoa Topper

1/3 cup frozen fat free whipped topping, thawed

1 ½ teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder

Place whipped topping in a small bowl. Lightly fold in the cocoa powder. Chill mixture until ready to serve.

To serve, spread the cocoa topper onto meringues. Top with raspber-

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Recipe Corner

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ries and dust lightly with additional powdered sugar.

Recipe from Diabetic Living Winter 2013

Rich Chocolate Squares with Raspberry Sauce

1 cup flour

½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1 teaspoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon salt

¾ cup brown sugar

1 small egg, beaten

¼ cup egg substitute

¼ cup soy milk

½ cup unsweetened applesauce

¼ cup vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 350°. Arrange rack in middle of oven. Coat an 8x8 square pan with cooking spray.

Place first four dry ingredients in mixing bowl and stir together with wire whisk or spoon. Combine sugar, eggs, milk, oil and applesauce in a separate bowl, mixing well.

Add dry ingredient mixture to liquids, stirring until combined. Pour into prepared pan and bake for about 30 minutes.

Remove from oven when cake bounces back when pressed lightly on the edge. Cool on wooden or wire rack for thirty minutes before cutting.

Fresh Raspberry Sauce

½ cup raspberries

1 Tablespoon cornstarch

3 Tablespoons Agave syrup or use sugar substitute for fewer calories

1 Tablespoon lemon juice

2 Tablespoons water

Wash and drain berries. Mash by hand until they are juicy, with small bits of fruit remaining. Set this aside and prepare thickening agent.

Mix cornstarch, agave syrup or your favorite calorie free sweetener, lemon juice and water in top of double boiler or small heavy saucepan. Stir over low heat until mixture begins to thicken, then add mashed fruit.

Cook an additional minute or two until the entire mixture thickens. Serve over chocolate squares; fat free whipped topping is optional!

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Recipe Corner

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Hot Chocolate

Everybody's favorite!

2 Tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder

2 Tbs. water

½ teaspoon vanilla

Calorie free sweetener of your choice

1 cup unsweetened soy milk

Mix the cocoa with 2 Tablespoons water in the bottom of a microwaveable cup. Add vanilla and calorie free sweetener then slowly stir in the soy milk.

Microwave for about one minute and stir before serving to dissolve cocoa completely. Skim milk is also an option. But the fat in soy milk gives your cocoa a rich and creamy, smooth consistency without the saturated fat of whole or 2% milk.