



Quit Smoking to Lower Cholesterol

High levels of “bad” (or LDL) cholesterol can block your arteries. And that can lead to heart disease or a stroke. It’s a big problem for people who eat unhealthy foods and avoid exercise. It’s an even bigger problem for people who smoke. About one in five adults in the United States smoke cigarettes. Quitting smoking can help restore healthy levels of cholesterol.

In a recent study, researchers followed 1,500 people who were trying to quit smoking. After a year, 36 percent of the smokers had quit. For those who had quit, researchers found that their “good” (or HDL) cholesterol levels had increased by about five percent. In other studies, quitting smoking increased good cholesterol levels by as much as 10 percent.

When you smoke, the nicotine in cigarettes raises bad cholesterol levels. At the same time, it decreases good cholesterol and increases the level of fats in your blood stream. This raises

the risk for blood clots, high blood pressure, and heart damage.

Eating a healthy diet, and getting regular exercise and medical care can help you manage your cholesterol. If you smoke, quitting will help too. Talk to your doctor about smoking cessation aids and programs to help you kick the habit.

*American Heart Journal.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

Start here to quit smoking: smokefree.gov

Stay Healthy During the Holidays

Did you know the average adult gains one to two pounds during the holidays from overeating and lack of exercise? That may not seem like much, but it adds up from year to year. You can still enjoy the holidays, but you need a plan to stay healthy:

Focus on fruits and vegetables.

At meal time, half your plate should include fruits and vegetables, according to Harvard’s Healthy Eating Plate and ChooseMyPlate.gov.

Take it easy on the treats. In just a few minutes, you could eat 1,000 empty calories (think eggnog, fudge, cookies) and be well on your way to gaining weight.

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Feast on Fiber for Better Health

How much fiber do you eat in a day? Fast food, soft drinks, and sugary snacks don’t offer much. And some foods like meat, fish, and dairy products do not contain fiber at all. The average American consumes just 15 grams of fiber daily. But you need more than that for good health.

Women should aim for 25 grams of fiber daily; 38 grams for men. Fiber is an essential part of a healthy diet. It helps prevent constipation and other bowel problems. It decreases your risk for type 2 diabetes and helps prevent weight gain. Fiber helps lower bad cholesterol levels, which reduces your risk for heart disease.

It can also help reduce your risk for certain types of cancer. In a recent study, researchers found that people who ate an average of 35 grams of fiber a day were 40 percent



less likely to develop colon cancer.

The best fiber sources are whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds. To increase the amount of fiber in your diet:

- **Choose whole-grain breads and cereals** instead of white bread and sugary cereals.
- **Leave the skin on** potatoes, apples, and carrots. The outer layer is highest in fiber.
- **Snack** on a handful of nuts, seeds, or raw vegetables instead of cookies or chips.
- **Add cooked beans and peas** to soups, stews, casseroles, and salads.
- **Eat at least three servings** of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta daily.

How much fiber for you?

Women: 25 grams of fiber daily

Men: 38 grams of fiber daily

Eat these fiber-rich foods <http://tinyurl.com/22vsy2g>

*National Institute of Medicine.
The Lancet.
Journal of Nutrition.*



Get Fit Faster in Just 30 Minutes

If there was an easier way to lose weight and get fit than exercising an hour a day, would you do it? It sounds a little too good to be true, right? Kind of like all those late-night exercise infomercials that promise amazing results. But it may be possible.

New research published in the *Journal of Physiology* found that short bouts of high intensity interval

training on a stationary bike for 90 minutes a week produced the same results as 300 minutes of cycling a week.

In the study, researchers compared changes in blood sugar, body fat, arterial health, and muscle mass in two groups of people. For six weeks, one group pedaled a stationary bike for 60 minutes a day at a steady pace. The other group followed a high-intensity interval training plan that involved pedaling at top speed for 30 seconds followed by 4.5 minutes of slow pedaling six times per workout. They completed this 30-minute workout three times a

week. Researchers found that both groups experienced similar health improvements. But the second group was able to achieve the same results in a fraction of the time.

If exercise keeps dropping off your schedule because of lack of time, try high intensity interval training. This type of exercise can be done with a stationary bike, on a treadmill, or even in the form of jumping jacks or other bodyweight exercises. And you'll be done in no time.

Journal of Physiology.
Harvard School of Public Health.
American Time Use Survey.

Healthy During the Holidays

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Eat healthy snacks, and avoid keeping a stash of high-calorie foods in your office drawer or pantry at home.

Never go to a party hungry. If you skip breakfast, and work through lunch before the holiday office party, you're setting yourself up for failure. Eating four to six smaller healthy meals throughout the day will help keep you from overeating later.

Walk it off. Make time to exercise during the holidays. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes a day of moderate physical activity. Take walk breaks at work, park further from the store when you go shopping, and take the stairs instead of the elevator. Do your best to maintain your exercise habits throughout the holidays.

You don't want the gift you remember most to be the extra pounds you packed on during the last two months of the year. Give yourself the gift of good health by making a plan to eat healthy and exercise regularly.

New England Journal of Medicine.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
National Institutes of Health.



Health Benefits of Tomatoes

Every year in Buñol, Spain, someone climbs a greasy pole to push a ham off the top and signal the start of La

Tomatina. When the ham falls, a water truck fires a stream of water into the air, and a tomato frenzy begins.

For the next hour, thousands of townspeople pelt each other with over 150,000 tomatoes. It's a celebration for this fruit, commonly mistaken for a vegetable.

You may not be planning to join the tomato fight, but you can still enjoy this garden-favorite food. Tomatoes are a rich source of vitamins and nutrients that protect your health. Studies show that antioxidants in tomatoes help control cholesterol levels, lower triglycerides, improve bone health, and prevent heart disease. Lycopene in tomatoes gives them their bright red color. And this carotenoid has been found to help prevent certain types of cancer. If you want to add some color, rich flavor and important health benefits to your meal, eat tomatoes. Use tomatoes in salads, sandwiches, soups, stir-fry, or healthy tacos.

Make your own sauce with tomatoes, and add them to spaghetti and lasagna. Eating tomatoes is better for your health than being covered in sauce and seeds at La Tomatina.

Journal of the National Cancer Institute.
American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.
U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Try these healthy tomato recipes <http://tinyurl.com/phft7k7>



ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

Q: How can I find the time to exercise when I'm so busy?

A: Go to www.wellsourc.info/wn/ask-time-for-exercise.pdf to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: evan@wellsourc.com, subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

Health Challenge: "Shake the Salt Habit" available at: www.wellsourc.info/wn/hc-shake-the-salt-habit.pdf

Choose low-sodium foods.