



## How to Keep Your Heart Healthy

Cardiovascular disease is our nation's top killer, and the primary cause of heart attacks and strokes. Having high cholesterol increases your risk for heart disease. Cholesterol is a fatty substance normally found in the blood. That shouldn't be alarming since it belongs there! Your body needs it to help make hormones, vitamin D, and other substances for healthy functioning. The problem with cholesterol comes when there's too much of it. High cholesterol in the blood will accumulate in the artery walls. This leads to coronary artery disease, heart attacks, and strokes.

High cholesterol (200 mg/dL or above) is very common. About half of all U.S. adults have cholesterol above a healthy level. Here are some positive actions you can take to lower your cholesterol level – or keep it



from getting too high in the first place.

- **Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.** Every pound of excess fat produces extra cholesterol. Losing weight – even 10-15 pounds – can have a significant effect.
- **Be physically active.** Aim for 30-60 minutes a day. You might need as much as 90 minutes daily if you're trying to maintain your weight loss. Even if your cholesterol remains elevated, you will still cut your risk of heart disease by being active.
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking damages your arteries, increasing the likelihood of cholesterol clogging them.
- **Eat healthfully.** It's important to choose your foods carefully.

Keeping cholesterol levels low is important for everyone – whether young, middle age, or older.

*National Institutes of Health. 2011.*



## Buckle Up, Every Time

Crashes cause millions of serious injuries every

year. In 2009 alone (the most recent data available), an estimated 2.3 million adults were treated in emergency rooms for motor vehicle injuries.

Seat belts reduce the risk of being killed or seriously injured in a crash by about 50%. Yet, about 1 in 7 adults do not wear a seat belt on every trip.

"If everyone in the vehicle buckled up every time, we could further reduce one of the leading causes of death," says CDC Director Thomas Frieden, MD, MPH.

To reduce your risk of injury:

- Use a seat belt on every trip, no matter how short the trip is.
- Encourage everyone in the car to buckle up, including those in the back seat.
- Make sure children are properly buckled in a seat belt, booster seat, or car seat – whichever is appropriate for their age and size.
- Have all children up to age 12 sit in the back seat.
- Place children in the middle of the back seat whenever possible, because it is the safest spot in the vehicle.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2011.*

### Tips for Healthy Eating

- **Eat fewer foods from animal sources** (e.g., meats, whole milk, cheese, butter), which contain saturated (unhealthy) fats.
- **Choose healthy fats.** Unsaturated fats actually help reduce cholesterol in the blood and lower your risk of heart disease. Some of the best sources of unsaturated fats are nuts, olives, avocados, seeds, flax meal, and vegetable oils (especially canola, olive, and soy).
- **Avoid eating pastries,** deep-fried foods, snack foods, crackers, cookies, pie crust, cake, and most convenience foods that are made with shortening, margarine, or other hydrogenated fats.
- **Eat enough omega 3 fatty acids,** which are associated with cardiovascular health. The best food sources are flax meal, walnuts, soy (beans, milk, and oil), canola oil, trout, herring, and salmon.
- **Limit or avoid dietary cholesterol.** Cholesterol is found only in foods of animal origin. There is no cholesterol in plant foods.
- **Eat high-fiber foods,** such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes. Fiber helps remove excess cholesterol from your body.
- **Eat foods high in folic acid (a B vitamin) every day.** Leafy green vegetables (spinach and turnip greens), fruits (citrus fruits and juices), and dried beans and peas are all natural sources of folic acid. Cereals fortified with folic acid (also called folate) are also good sources.
- **Eat whole foods instead of refined carbohydrates and sugars.** For example, choose brown rice instead of white rice. Reserve cake, pie, and cookies for special occasions. Drink water in place of soft drinks.

*National Institutes of Health. 2011.*

## Worried about Breast Cancer?

*Women can reduce their risk of breast cancer with this prescription: Exercise daily.*

This conclusion is based on the Nurses' Health Study. Over a 20-year period, more than 95,000 women reported how often they exercised, what type of activity they engaged in, and how intensive their exercise was. During the 20-year study, 5% of the women developed breast cancer.

Researchers analyzed the data and found that women who exercised for at least 1 hour daily at a moderate level (e.g., brisk walking) were 15% less likely to develop breast cancer than those who walked less than one



hour per week. Further increases in activity after menopause (e.g., walking 90 minutes a day) may be more beneficial.

Postmenopausal women who were inactive or who had low activity levels were 10% less likely to develop breast cancer if they began exercising 60-90 minutes daily. Brisk walking was the most beneficial of all the exercises women engaged in (e.g., swimming, skipping rope, vigorous housework). When you are walking at a pace where you are breathing deeply but conversation is possible – you are walking briskly enough.

*Archives of Internal Medicine. 2010;170(19): 1758-1764.*

**The best way to fight breast cancer is to live in such a way as to prevent it:**

1. Don't drink alcohol.
2. Keep your weight in the healthy zone.
3. Exercise daily.
4. Avoid red meat. Some studies show that by doing this you can lower your risk for breast cancer.
5. Eat soy foods regularly.

It's also important to develop and implement an early detection plan for breast cancer.

Find out what's recommended:

<http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/BreastCancer/MoreInformation/BreastCancerEarlyDetection/breast-cancer-early-detection-toc>

## You Can Improve Your Relationship!

Half of the marriages in the United States end in divorce. But yours doesn't have to be one of them. Struggling marriages can be improved, and good marriages can be made better. Here are 14 ideas to help you cultivate love and mutual respect in your relationship.

- Take responsibility for the part you play in any problem that exists.
- Try to see things from your partner's perspective.
- Determine to focus on your partner, and actively listen to and validate his or her feelings.
- Commit quality time to each other. Give each other undivided, uninterrupted attention daily. Discuss with your partner how much together-time he or she feels is important for a healthy relationship. If it differs from how much time you need, be willing to work out a compromise.
- Plan a special time together every week – a date night – where the

Learn how to manage conflict successfully: [utahmarriage.org/html/suggestions/managing-conflict-successfully](http://utahmarriage.org/html/suggestions/managing-conflict-successfully)

two of you do a fun or romantic activity together.

- Avoid negative, love-defeating behaviors such as being demanding, angry, disrespectful, insensitive, annoying, or dishonest.
- Include your partner in your life – your thoughts, preferences, daily activities, aspirations, and regrets.
- Negotiate fairly, and learn the rules for conflict resolution.
- Deal with issues early – before they become a huge conflict.
- Consider yourself a team. Consult your partner regarding day-to-day living, and set future goals together.
  - Keep your priorities straight. When you place career, possessions, money, hobbies, interests, philanthropic activities, or even your children or church work above your partner, you're asking for relationship trouble.
- Find something the two of you feel strongly about and can work on together, such as a charity, a cause, or a hobby.



- Learn from your mistakes. Instead of despairing over a long history of poor marriage skills, consider your mistakes an experiment in what not to do and try something else next time.
- Meet your partner's most important emotional needs (e.g., admiration, affection, conversation, domestic support, family commitment, financial support, honesty and openness, physical attractiveness, companionship, and sexual fulfillment).

*American Psychological Association. 2011.*

**ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR**

**Q:** Can a person increase his or her metabolism? If "yes," then what increases it?

**A:** Go to [www.wellsourc.info/wn/ask-metabolism.pdf](http://www.wellsourc.info/wn/ask-metabolism.pdf) to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: [paulaw@wellsourc.com](mailto:paulaw@wellsourc.com), subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

**Health Challenge:** "Eat Nuts and Seeds Daily" available at: [www.wellsourc.info/wn/hc-nuts.pdf](http://www.wellsourc.info/wn/hc-nuts.pdf).

Nuts and seeds lower a person's risk for heart disease. Walnuts and flax meal help lower the risk for sudden death from a heart attack. Eat at least one serving (1 oz) of nuts, seeds, or nut butter daily.