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ICMS is a full service employee benefits consulting firm, utilizing creative and innovative solutions to assist clients in achieving greater value by increasing efficiencies, reducing cost, and enhancing employee productivity consistent with each client's unique culture.



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Love is in the air!

Valentine's day is right around the corner, and the stores have begun stocking their shelves with plenty of goodies and flower arrangements in preparation for the special day. While it *is* okay to indulge in a few of those chocolates from your sweetie (it'd be a shame to let them go to waste!), February is also American Heart Month. So just remember to add a few heart-healthy foods to your grocery list to balance out those treats and you can enjoy this year's holiday of love with a clear conscience. (Your heart will thank you!)



American Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. Every year, 1 in 4 deaths are caused by heart disease.

The good news? Heart disease can often be prevented when people make healthy choices and manage their health conditions. Communities, health professionals, and families can work together to create opportunities for people to make healthier choices.

Make a difference in your community: Spread the word about strategies for preventing heart disease and encourage people to live heart healthy lives.

Sources: The American Heart Association <http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/>

Eating "Heart Healthy"

Most people eat much more sodium (salt) than they need. This can lead to health problems like high blood pressure. To lower the amount of sodium in your diet, follow these tips when you go food shopping:

- Choose fresh instead of processed foods when you can.
- Use the Nutrition Facts label to check the amount of sodium. Look for foods with 5% Daily Value (DV) or less. A sodium content of 20% DV or more is high.
- Look for foods labeled "low sodium," "reduced sodium," or "no salt added."



Take the list below with you the next time you go food shopping.

Vegetables and Fruits

- Fresh fruits: apples, oranges, or bananas
- Fresh vegetables: spinach, carrots, or broccoli
- Frozen vegetables without added sauce
- Canned vegetables that are low in sodium or have no salt added
- Low sodium vegetable juice

- Frozen or dried fruit (unsweetened)
- Canned fruit (packed in water or 100% juice)

Breads, Cereals, and Grains

- Rice or pasta
- Unsweetened oatmeal
- Unsalted popcorn

Tip: If your food comes with a seasoning packet, use only part of the packet. This will lower the amount of sodium in the food.

Meats, Nuts, and Beans

- Fish or shellfish
- Chicken or turkey breast without skin
- Lean cuts of beef or pork
- Unsalted nuts and seeds
- Peas and beans
- Canned beans labeled "no salt added" or "low sodium"
- Eggs

Milk and Milk Products

Choose fat-free or low-fat milk (1%) and yogurt. Be sure to check the label on cheese, which can be high in sodium (natural Swiss cheese is a good low-sodium option). Milk and yogurt are also good sources of potassium, which can help lower blood pressure.

Dressings, Oils, and Condiments

- Unsalted margarine and spreads (soft, tub, or liquid) with no trans fats
- Vegetable oils (canola, olive, peanut, or sesame)
- Sodium-free, light mayonnaise and salad dressing
- Vinegar

Seasonings

Try these seasonings instead of salt to flavor your food:

- Herbs, spices, or salt-free seasoning blends
- Chopped vegetables, such as garlic, onions, and peppers
- Lemons and limes
- Ginger

Sources: HealthFinder, www.healthfinder.gov

Blood Pressure

Check your blood pressure at least every 2 years starting at age 18. It's important to check your blood pressure often, especially if you're over age 40.

High blood pressure is the same as hypertension.

Hypertension ("hy-puhr-TEHN-shun") is the medical term for high blood pressure. High blood pressure has no signs or symptoms. The only way to know is to get tested. By taking steps to lower your blood pressure, you can reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure. Lowering your blood pressure can help you live a longer, healthier life.



What do blood pressure numbers mean?

A blood pressure test measures how hard your heart is working to pump blood through your body.

Blood pressure is measured with 2 numbers. The first number is the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats. The second number is the pressure in your arteries between each beat, when your heart relaxes.

Compare your blood pressure to these numbers:

- Normal blood pressure is lower than 120/80 (said "120 over 80")
- High blood pressure is 140/90 or higher.
- Blood pressure that's between normal and high (for example, 130/85) is called pre-hypertension, or high normal blood pressure.

Sources: HealthFinder www.healthfinder.gov

Taking Aspirin Daily

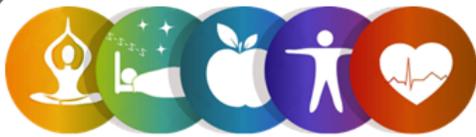
Taking aspirin every day can lower your risk of heart attack or stroke. If you are a man age 45 to 79 or a woman age 55 to 79, ask your doctor about taking aspirin.

You may be at higher risk of having heart attack or stroke if you:

- Smoke
- Have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes
- Have a family history of heart disease

Talk with your doctor about your risk of heart attack or stroke, and ask if daily aspirin is right for you. For most people, aspirin is safe. But it's not right for everyone. Be sure to talk with your doctor before you start a daily aspirin regimen.

Sources: HealthFinder www.healthfinder.gov



GotHealth?

Tip: To ward off strokes, eat more fruits. A large Danish study found that people who ate the most fruit had a 40% lower risk of ischemic stroke (the most common type) compared to those who ate little fruit. Citrus fruits were most protective. The likely protective elements in these foods are vitamin C and flavonoid pigments, plus an array of other antioxidants and phytochemicals.