

health matters

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Medical Executive Committee

“RECOGNITION OF Service”

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FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH

Lower Your Risk of HEART DISEASE



CONTROLLING YOUR RISK

Heart disease may be the leading cause of death for both men and women, but that doesn't mean you have to accept it as your fate. Although you lack the power to change some risk factors – such as family history, age and race – you can always control your lifestyle choices. Take steps to avoid heart disease by not smoking, getting regular exercise and eating healthy foods. Prevent heart problems in the future by adopting a healthy lifestyle today. Here are five strategies to get you started.

1. DON'T SMOKE OR USE TOBACCO PRODUCTS

“If you smoke, quit,” advises Vachaspathi Palakodeti, M.D., ECRMC cardiologist and secretary of the Medical Executive

Committee. “That's the most powerful, preventable risk factor for heart disease.” No amount of smoking is safe. Smokeless tobacco and low-tar and low-nicotine cigarettes are also risky, as is exposure to secondhand smoke. Tobacco smoke contains more than 4,800 chemicals. Many of these can damage your heart and blood vessels, making them more vulnerable to narrowing of the arteries (atherosclerosis). Atherosclerosis can ultimately lead to a heart attack.

In addition, the nicotine in cigarette smoke makes your heart work harder by constricting blood vessels and increasing your heart rate and blood pressure. Carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke replaces some of the oxygen in your blood. This increases your blood pressure by forcing your heart to work harder to supply enough oxygen. Women who smoke and take birth control pills are at even greater risk of having a heart attack or stroke than are those who don't do

either. Worse, this risk increases with age, especially over 35. The good news, though, is that when you quit smoking, your risk of heart disease drops dramatically within just one year. And no matter how long or how much you smoked, you'll start reaping rewards as soon as you quit.

2. EXERCISE, EXERCISE, EXERCISE

You already know that exercise is good for you. But you may not realize just how good it is for you. Regularly participating in moderately vigorous exercise can reduce your risk of fatal heart disease by nearly a quarter. And when you combine exercise with other lifestyle measures, such as maintaining a healthy weight, the payoff is even greater. Regular exercise helps prevent heart disease by increasing blood flow to your heart and strengthening your heart's contractions so that your heart pumps more blood with less effort. Physical activity also helps you control your weight and can reduce your chances of developing other conditions that may put a strain on your heart, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. Exercise can also reduce stress, which may also be a factor in heart disease.

Federal guidelines recommend that you get at least 30 to 60 minutes of moderately intense physical activity most days of the week. However, even shorter amounts of exercise offer heart benefits; so if you can't meet those guidelines, don't simply give up on exercise entirely. And remember that things like gardening, housekeeping, taking the stairs and walking the dog all count toward your total. You don't have to exercise strenuously to achieve benefits, but you can see bigger benefits by increasing the intensity, duration and frequency of your workouts.

3. HAVE A HEART-HEALTHY DIET

Consistently eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products can help protect your heart. Legumes, low-fat sources of protein and certain types of fish can also reduce your risk of heart disease. Limiting your intake of certain fats is also important. Of the types of fat – saturated, polyunsaturated, monounsaturated and trans fat – saturated fat and trans fat increase the risk of coronary artery disease by raising blood cholesterol levels. Saturated fat is the most worrisome offender because foods containing this type of fat are more prevalent in typical American diets. Major sources of saturated fat include beef, butter, cheese, milk, and coconut and palm oils.

Heart-healthy eating isn't all about cutting back, though. Most people, for instance, need to add more fruits and vegetables to their diet – with a goal of five to 10 servings a day. “There's a huge amount of data to suggest that fruits and vegetables are highly effective in preventing not just cardiovascular disease, but cancer and other diseases as well,” Dr. Palakodeti says. Omega-3 fatty acids, a type of polyunsaturated fat, may decrease your risk of heart attack, protect against irregular heartbeats and lower blood pressure. Some fish are a good natural source of omega-3s. However, pregnant women and women of childbearing age should avoid shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish because they contain levels of mercury high enough to pose a danger to a developing fetus. Omega-3s are present in smaller amounts in flaxseed oil, walnut oil, soybean oil and canola oil, and they can also be found in supplements. Following a heart-healthy diet also means drinking alcohol only in moderation – no more than two

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A Heart-to-Heart About Women and CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE:

Cardiovascular disease claims more women's lives than the next seven causes of death combined – about 500,000 women's lives a year.

El Centro Regional Medical Center supports the American Heart Association's vital efforts to raise awareness of heart disease as a threat to women.

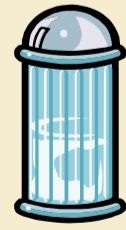
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) ranks first among all disease categories in hospital discharges for women.
- Over 40 percent of all female deaths in America occur from CVD, which includes coronary heart disease and stroke.
- CVD is a particularly important problem among minority women. The death rate due to CVD is substantially higher in black women than in white women.
- In 2001, CVD claimed the lives of 498,863 females; cancer (all forms combined) 266,693.

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THE “HIDDEN” SALTS

Reduce The Amount Of Salt You Eat



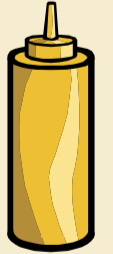
“White Salt”
-Table Salt



“Black Salt”
-Soy Sauce,
Fish Sauces,
Teriyaki



“Red Salt”
-Ketchup



“Yellow Salt”
-Mustard



“Green Salt”
-Pickles



“Pink Salt”
-Lunch Meats

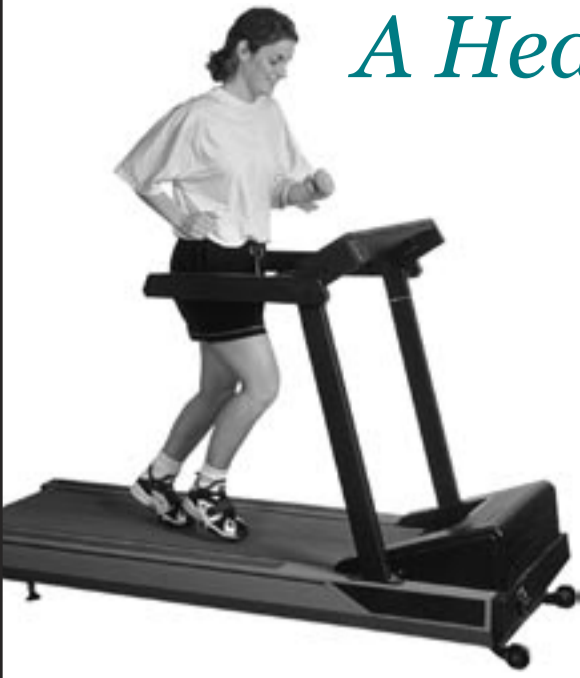


“Brown Salt”
-Soups, Gravies

Center of Healthcare Excellence

A Heart-to-Heart About Women AND CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE:

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- In 2001, coronary heart disease claimed the lives of 248,184 females compared with 41,394 lives from breast cancer and 65,632 from lung cancer.
- 38 percent of women compared with 25 percent of men will die within one year after a heart attack.
- More women than men die of stroke.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Cardiovascular disease is mostly preventable, so understanding these serious health threats can make a lifesaving difference.
- Cut back on foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol.
- Quit smoking.
- Check blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels, and keep them under control.

- Exercise at least 30 minutes a day on most (if not all) days of the week.
- Lose weight if you are overweight and keep at a healthy weight.
- Screenings are an effective way to detect cardiovascular problems early on so doctors can begin to treat them. A simple and effective way to detect and diagnose cardiac abnormalities is to have an electrocardiogram (ECG) test performed by a cardiologist. For extra clarity, an echocardiogram (ultrasound scan of the heart) may be necessary.

For additional information about Heart Disease in Women contact your physician, or log onto www.ecrmc.org for a physician referral.

Lower Your Risk of HEART DISEASE

Lower Your Risk, from page 1

drinks a day for men, one a day for women. At that moderate level, alcohol can have a protective effect on your heart. Above that, it becomes a health hazard.

4. MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

As you put on weight in adulthood, you gain mostly fatty tissue. This excess weight can lead to conditions that increase your chances of heart disease – high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. How do you know if your weight is healthy? One way is to calculate your body mass index (BMI), which considers your height and weight in determining whether you have a healthy or unhealthy percentage of body fat.

BMI numbers 25 and higher are associated with higher blood fats, higher blood pressure, and an increased risk of heart disease and

stroke. The BMI is a good but imperfect guide. Muscle weighs more than fat, for instance, and women and men who are very muscular and physically fit can have high BMIs without added health risks. Because of that, waist circumference is also a useful tool to assess abdominal fat. In general, men are considered overweight if their waist measurement is greater than 40 inches. And women, in general, are overweight if their waist measurement is greater than 35 inches. Even small reductions in weight can be beneficial. Reducing your weight by just 10 percent can decrease your blood pressure, lower your blood cholesterol level and reduce your risk of diabetes.

5. GET REGULAR HEALTH SCREENINGS

High blood pressure and high cholesterol can damage our cardiovascular system,

including your heart. But without testing for them, you probably won't know whether you have these conditions. Regular screening can tell you what your numbers are and whether you need to take action.

- **Blood Pressure.** Regular blood pressure screenings start in childhood. Adults should have their blood pressure checked at least every two years. You may need more frequent checks if your numbers aren't optimal or if you have other risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Optimal blood pressure is less than 120/80 millimeters of mercury.
- **Cholesterol Levels.** Adults should have their cholesterol measured at least once every five years. You may need more frequent testing if your numbers aren't optimal or if you have other risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Some children may need their blood cholesterol tested.

PREVENTION PAYS

Heart disease is often avoidable. Following a heart-healthy lifestyle doesn't have to be complicated, and it doesn't mean you need to live a life of self-deprivation. Instead, find ways to incorporate heart-healthy habits into your lifestyle – and you may well enjoy a healthier life for years to come.

Contact Dr. Palakodeti at 355-8300, or log onto www.ecrmc.org for additional physician information.

Log on to our website at www.ecrmc.org to complete our Survey, and receive a **FREE GIFT!**

Or, call 760.339.7314 to have a survey mailed to your home.

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Staff Writer Robert V. Liggett
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BUILDING A Healthy Heart

Tips for exercising to maintain a healthy heart from Dustin Bonham, Director of the ECRMC Physical Therapy Department:

1. Consult a physician before starting on any exercise regimen.
2. Start in moderation.
3. Start an exercise program, such as walking, cycling, jogging, for 30 to 60 minutes at least 3 to 4 times a week. Studies show that exercise effectively reduces the number of fatal heart attacks in people with coronary artery disease.
4. A complete exercise program consists of aerobic exercise, strength training, and stretching.
5. Once you start exercising, stop your activity at once if you experience chest pain, feel faint or lightheaded, or become extremely out of breath.
6. Set goals you can reach. If you expect too much, you are likely to become discouraged and stop exercising.

"RECOGNITION OF Service" ECRMC Medical Executive Committee

"On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank the outstanding physicians who serve on the ECRMC Medical Executive Committee for their hard work, dedication and commitment as we work together to provide Healthcare Excellence in the Imperial Valley."

- Debra Driskill, President

The Medical Executive Committee is responsible for coordinating and implementing the professional and organizational activities and policies of the medical staff.

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