

# HEALTHY LIVING

Wellness Newsletter from **AAOA**

February 2014



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# Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Cookies



Oatmeal and whole-wheat flour make these cookies healthy and delicious.

Want to bake a special treat for your family tonight? These delicious chocolate chip oatmeal cookies are sure to please kids of all ages.

## Ingredients

- 1/2 cup trans-fat-free margarine
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
- 1/2 cup uncooked oatmeal
- 10 oz. package chocolate chips

## Preparation

Mix together margarine and sugars. Add egg and vanilla and continue mixing. Slowly add the flours, baking powder, baking soda and salt. With a wooden spoon, mix in the oatmeal and chocolate chips.

Cook at 375 degrees F for 10 to 12 minutes.

## Nutrition Facts

Yields 3 dozen (36) cookies

Amount Per Serving

Calories 110g	Fiber 1g
Fat 4g	Protein 1g
Sodium 53mg	Carbs 17g

# Prehypertension

## Take heart – and take control

### Q. What is prehypertension?

A. When your blood pressure readings regularly fall between normal and high, it's considered prehypertension.

Your blood pressure numbers are a measure of the force of your blood against your artery walls. The first number — systolic pressure — is when your heart is beating. The second number — diastolic pressure — is between beats, when your heart is at rest.

Blood pressure can vary. One slightly above-normal reading may not be a problem, but when readings on two or more occasions are in the prehypertension range, it can be a concern and a signal for action.

### Q. Why is it a problem?

A. Prehypertension raises your risk of both stroke and heart disease. It often leads to high blood pressure. High blood pressure does damage throughout the body by raising the risk of heart failure, kidney disease and blindness among other problems.

### Q. Who is likely to get it?

A. Prehypertension and hypertension are both very common — especially as people get older. In fact, middle-aged Americans have a 90 percent chance of developing high blood pressure during their lives.

However, young people aren't immune.

According to the National Institutes of Health, more and more young adults have high blood pressure — or are at risk of getting it. It also occurs more often among people who:

- Are African-American
- Are overweight
- Have a family history of the condition
- Smoke
- Are inactive

### Q: Are there symptoms to look out for?

A: No. People with blood pressure that is higher than normal usually feel fine. You need to get it checked to know where you stand. Your doctor can tell you how often you should have yours measured.

### Q. If it's too high, what steps can I take?

A. You can start with lifestyle changes. Doctors often encourage these key steps to help people improve their blood pressure — and their health:

- Lose excess weight.
- Get regular exercise.\*
- Focus on healthy foods
- Quit smoking, if you smoke.
- Manage stress.

People who take these steps can often avoid other forms of treatment. But, if lifestyle changes alone aren't enough, there are medicines that can help.

\*For safety's sake, talk with your doctor before significantly increasing your activity level.

The box below shows general categories that doctors use for diagnosing adults with hypertension, or high blood pressure:

	Systolic (mmHg)		Diastolic (mmHg)
Normal	Less than 120	And	Less than 80
Prehypertension	120 to 139	or	80 to 89
Hypertension stage 1	140 to 159	or	90 to 99
Hypertension stage 2	160 to higher	or	100 or higher

Please note: If you have diabetes, heart failure, coronary artery disease or kidney disease, your blood pressure may be considered high at lower levels than for the general public.

Sources: American Heart Association: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

# A Healthy Romance with Chocolate

Chocolate, many loyal fans adore it. Here's some sweet news for chocolate lovers: When chocolate's on the dark side, it can be a tasty treat with benefits.

Studies have shown that dark chocolate can have a positive effect on health, especially on the heart. This intense treat appears to lower blood pressure. It also may help reduce bad cholesterol and protect against stroke.

What's at work? Dark chocolate is full of antioxidants and flavonoids. These natural chemicals — found in plant foods — are thought to be behind chocolate's positive effects on our blood and blood vessels.

## For the Love of Chocolate

If you don't eat chocolate, there is no need to start now. Protective plant compounds are in many other nutritious choices including fruits, veggies and tea.

However if you like chocolate, here are some tips to enjoy it wisely:

**Go dark.** Dark varieties have more antioxidant kick than milk chocolate. Look for chocolate that's labeled rich in cacao — the higher the percentage, the better.

**Look to the label.** Use the Nutrition Facts to compare the calories, sugar and fat per serving size. This can help guide you to products with the lowest amounts.

**Make it tiny treats.** Dark chocolate may have benefits, but it's also packed with calories; so eating too much can lead to weight gain. Keep portions small. Even one ounce can provide an antioxidant boost.





## Ask the Expert - Macular Degeneration

Q: My 74-year-old mother has macular degeneration. Her doctor said it can run in families. Should I be worried about my vision, too?

It's certainly something to think about. Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is one of the main causes of vision loss among Americans age 60 and older. And, you are at higher risk if you have an immediate family member with this eye disease.

AMD is painless and can develop slowly. So, you may not notice it right away. That's why regular eye exams are so important. The good news — for you and your mother — is that early detection and treatment can be sight savers.

### What is AMD?

AMD affects the center part of the retina — the area called the macula. When it's damaged, our ability to see objects clearly in our central vision is affected. It doesn't cause complete blindness — you keep your peripheral vision. But, it can make some daily tasks difficult, such as reading or driving.

### There are two types of AMD:

- **Dry AMD.** This accounts for about 90 percent of all cases. It occurs when cells in the macula slowly break down. The most common symptom of dry AMD is slightly blurred vision.

Dry AMD usually progresses gradually. There are three stages: early, intermediate and advanced — which may occur in one or both eyes. In most cases, only advanced AMD causes vision loss.

- **Wet AMD.** With this type, abnormal blood vessels grow under the macula. They can leak blood and fluid — which pushes the macula out of place. Damage occurs quickly and can cause sudden vision changes. For example, straight lines may begin to appear bent or crooked. It's considered advanced AMD.

### Living with AMD

Talk with your primary physician about a comprehensive eye exam. And, ask how often you should be seen for follow-up exams.\* An eye care professional can check for AMD and other eye problems.

Vision loss can't be reversed. But, the right treatment may help preserve your mother's remaining sight. And, low-vision aids, such as magnifiers and large-print reading materials, might help make daily tasks easier.

People with intermediate or advanced dry AMD may benefit from certain vitamins and minerals. But, these should only be taken under the direction of a doctor. Some may have side effects or interact with other medicines.

People diagnosed with wet AMD should work closely with their doctors to decide treatment options that may be suitable for them.\*

*\*Check your benefits plan to see what services may be covered.*

### AAOA HEALTHCARE

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## FEBRUARY WELLNESS TIP



Sheridah Bennett  
(AAOA Wellness Champion)

## Wellness Tip

### I Love You

When was the last time you said “I love you” to a loved one? During this season of love make sure that the people in your life know you care and spread a little love.

We want your feed-back about the Wellness Newsletter. Please e-mail us at [wellness@aooamerica.org](mailto:wellness@aooamerica.org) with any wellness tips or healthy recipe ideas.