

# HEALTHY LIVING

Wellness Newsletter from **AAOA**

**2015**  
FEBRUARY

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# 10 Minutes to a Healthier Heart



Fitness experts say you can workout 10 to 15 minutes at a time and still reduce your risk for heart disease.

The American Heart Association recommends all adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week.

Break it up! 150 minutes each week breaks down to 30 minutes, 5 days a week. Want to break it up even more? Just make sure you are getting at least 10 minutes of aerobic activity at a time.

Try 15-minute increments, twice a day, 5 days a week.

## What is moderate physical activity?

- Brisk walking, jogging or running
- Biking
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Jumping rope

\*Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any type of exercise program.

## Coping in a Crisis: Stress Control Strategies Ease the Way

Whether it's a destructive tornado, a devastating flood or an unthinkable violent event, a crisis may leave you shocked, distraught or even displaced. And it's understandable if you don't know how to cope with all your needs and emotions.

Moving forward may not be easy. At first, you'll need to focus on your most urgent and basic needs.

In the days and weeks ahead, taking steps to seek help, work through your feelings and manage your stress can start to give you back a sense of control.

**Where do I go from here?** After a traumatic event, counseling and other crisis resources can be crucial.\* They can help you with your emotional, physical and financial needs. Your workplace may even provide an employee assistance

program that can put you in touch with professional help.

Then, consider some of these strategies that can help you cope:

**Reach out.** Your loved ones, friends, neighbors and others may want to lend a hand — but not know how. So don't be afraid to tell them what you need. And try to help others if you can. Accepting and giving assistance can be healthy steps forward.

**Talk about your feelings.** Share them with those you trust — people who will listen and understand. That could be friends, family members, spiritual advisers or counselors. Local support groups can also help you connect with people in similar situations. Giving voice to your heartbreak, fears or worries may help

you move past them.

**Start a journal.** Writing about a difficult event can help you organize your thoughts, process your emotions and solve problems. Use it as a way to focus on what you're grateful for — even in your darkest moments.

**Create a routine.** You and your family may not be able to pick up right where you left off. But over time, try to return to some of your normal daily activities. Write out the day's to-do list. Cook a meal together. These simple everyday acts can be a comfort when life feels chaotic.

**Be kind to yourself.** Look for positive ways to let go of stress and tension. Try a few minutes of quiet meditation. Do slow stretches while taking deep breaths. Or turn to a favorite hobby that eases

your mind. Maybe that's knitting, sketching or playing the guitar, for example.

**Listen to your body.** When you're upset and struggling, your physical needs — such as good nutrition, sleep and exercise — may be the last thing you're thinking about. But they can be powerful tools for coping. A short walk may clear your head a bit. Or when you're worn out, taking a nap might be the best medicine.

**Building resilience over time.** These crisis strategies can help you get through any difficult time. Practicing them may strengthen your coping skills — and give you confidence when you face challenges, big and small.

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

Doctors aren't exactly sure why exercise helps your heart, but it has been shown to raise the level of HDL cholesterol - the so-called good kind - in the blood. High HDL levels have been shown to help protect against heart disease.





# Anger Hurts Hearts

Scientists have long observed connections between emotions and health. The heart and the head are often inseparable, whether it is heartache or heartbreak.

## Personality may predict heart disease.

Some people are unable to relax and are quick to feel angry or frustrated when things don't go as planned. These compulsive, driven

overachievers are sometimes called "Type A" personalities. Type A behavior might include traits like ambition, urgency, anger, aggression and hostility.

When comparing angry people to more even-tempered types, angry folks are more likely to have:

- Lower good-to-bad cholesterol (HDL/LDL) ratios
- Higher triglyceride (fat) levels
- Higher blood pressure that may rise even higher

in the three years following a major anger incident

Those who are consistently angry are more likely to be male, smokers and drinkers. People with anger problems also tend to come from families that are chaotic and communicate poorly.

## How it works

Activities that lead to intense anger, frustration, anxiety and sadness can trigger the body's natural flight-or-fight response, which in some cases may cause:

- Narrowing of blood vessels that supply

oxygen-rich blood to the heart

- Rupturing of atherosclerotic plaques, which can cause blood clots to form, leading to heart attack or stroke
- Blocked arteries caused by blood platelets clumping and sticking.

## Getting help

If you or others feel your anger is out of control and affecting relationships, consider counseling. Once you find out what triggers your anger, a therapist can teach you how to change your thinking and behavior to handle your anger better.

# Lowering High Blood Pressure

A DASH May Do It: Changing how you eat may do wonders for your heart

Are you trying to live healthier — and control your blood pressure? Here's a four-pronged approach that's likely to help: your fork.

Choosing a heart-healthy diet is a simple and effective way to help lower — and maybe even prevent — high blood pressure, also called hypertension. One of the best examples of this is an eating plan called DASH. That stands for *Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension*.

The DASH diet is rich in nutrients and low in sodium. According to the National Institutes of Health, it's been proven to lower high blood pressure. And that can take a big bite out of your risk for both heart attack and stroke — and other health conditions too.

## Ready to dig in?

The DASH plan is not just healthy — it's tasty and satisfying too. In fact, it can be

a good change for the entire family. With DASH, you:

- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables
- Limit salt and sodium
- Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy products
- Include whole grains, fish, skinless poultry, beans, seeds and nuts
- Go easy on red meat, fat and sugar

Of course, portion control and getting regular exercise matter too. In fact, how much you eat depends on your age and how active you are.

## Keep in mind...

DASH offers a healthy way to better control your blood pressure. But it doesn't take the place of medicines your doctor may prescribe.

\*If you have questions about your treatment plan, talk with your doctor.

## Breakfast:

- 1/2 Cup oatmeal with 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 mini whole-wheat bagel with 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- 1 medium banana
- 1 cup low-fat or fat-free milk

## Lunch:

- Chicken Salad with:
  - 3 ounces skinless chicken breast
  - 2 slices whole-wheat toast
  - 1 slice low-sodium Swiss chesse
  - 1 tablespoon low-fat or fat-free mayonaise
- 1 cup cantaloupe
- 1 cup 100% apple juice

## Dinner:

- 1 cup cooked spaghetti with:
  - 3/4 cup low-sodium vegetarian sauce
  - 3 tablespoons Parmesan chesse
- Spinach Salad:
  - 1 cup fresh spinach
  - 1/4 cup grated carrots
  - 1/4 cup sliced mushrooms
  - 1 tablespoon vinegar and oil dressing
- 1/2 cup corn (cooked or frozen)
- 1/2 cup canned pears

A sample DASH daily meal plan

# How to Tell if it's a Heart Attack

Heart Attacks are a major cause of premature death.

## Know the Signs.

### Heart attack symptoms:

- Chest pain or discomfort, usually in the center of our chest. It may last longer than a few minutes, or it may go away and come back. You may feel pressure, squeezing, pain or fullness.
- Pain or discomfort in other areas. You could have pain in one or both of your arms, neck, jaw, back or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. You may have this with or without chest pain or discomfort.
- Other symptoms, such as nausea, breaking out in a cold sweat or feeling lightheaded.



The most common symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women and some people with diabetes are more likely than men to have other symptoms, including:

- Indigestion, nausea or vomiting
- Shortness of breath
- Neck, back or jaw pain
- Stomach pain or heartburn
- Lightheadedness or unusual tiredness

### How can you help prevent a heart attack?

**Don't smoke.** If someone in your household smokes, encourage them to quit.

**Eat whole grains, and plenty of fruits and vegetables.** Cut down on saturated and trans fats.

**Lower high blood pressure and cholesterol.** If necessary, consult a doctor.

**Be active.** Do some form of physical activity every day.

**Aim for a healthy weight.** Being active and eating healthy can help you lose weight.

**Reduce stress and limit alcohol.** Drinking too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure and lead to other health problems.

## FEBRUARY Wellness Tip



**Sheridah Bennett**  
(AAOA Wellness Champion)

## Show Affection

Parenting can be a tough job, one that is bound to involve occasional mistakes, hair-pulling moments, and times when you second guess your decisions. Need a little guidance? One tip from the American Academy of Family Physicians and other experts is to spread hugs and I-love-yous liberally throughout the day.

## Southwestern Chicken & White Bean Soup

### Ingredients

- 1/2 pound (8 oz) uncooked chicken breast, diced
- 1 tablespoon, less-sodium taco seasoning (Old El Paso)
- 1 T olive or canola oil
- 2 cups chopped fresh spinach
- 2 (14 oz) cans fat-free less-sodium chicken broth
- 3 (16 oz) can cannellini beans or other white beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup green salsa
- Frozen Corn (Optional)
- Chopped fresh cilantro (Optional)

### Directions

1. Combine chicken and taco seasoning, toss well to coat. Heat olive oil. Add chicken; sauté 3-5 minutes over low-medium heat or until chicken is lightly browned.
2. Add portabella mushrooms and continue to sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add broth.
3. Mash one can of beans in a bowl, leaving the remaining two cans whole. Add mashed and whole beans to pan, along with salsa, stirring well. Bring to a boil and reduce heat.
4. Add spinach (and corn if desired) and simmer for 10 minutes or until slightly thick.\*



### Nutrition Facts

Yields 8 Servings

Amount Per Serving

Calories	195g	Fiber	9g
Fat	3g	Protein	17g
Sodium	383mg	Cholesterol	16g

\*Serve with sour cream and cilantro if desired.

### AAOA HEALTHCARE

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