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Tips to lower your risk for heart disease

Kayla Colgrove, MS, RDN,
ACSM-CPT
Extension Educator, Lancaster Co.

Did you know heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States? According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an American has a heart attack every 40 seconds. February is American Heart Month to raise awareness about heart disease.

Heart disease refers to several different types of heart conditions. The most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease, which occurs when the coronary arteries become narrowed or blocked and can cause chest pain, heart attack or stroke. Additional heart conditions involve the heart valves, muscle or rhythm. Check out the following tips to lower your risk for heart disease.

Know your risk factors

Several factors can increase your risk for heart disease. Your age, gender, race, ethnicity or family history are risk factors you cannot control. You can modify, treat or control the following factors to help lower heart disease risk:

- High blood pressure
- High low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Overweight and obesity
- Poor diet
- Physical inactivity

Eat healthy

The American Heart Association recommends eating a healthy diet that emphasizes:

- A variety of fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Fat-free (skim) and low-fat



- (1%) dairy products
- Skinless poultry and fish
- Nuts and legumes
- Non-tropical vegetable oils (e.g. canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean or sunflower)

Choose foods lower in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and sugar. Select lean beef (e.g. round, sirloin, chuck, loin), lean or extra lean ground beef (no more than 15% fat), lean ham and lean pork (e.g. tenderloin, loin chop).

Choose lower-sodium options by using the Nutrition Facts label to compare the amount of sodium in ham, processed sandwich meats (e.g. turkey, chicken or ham), canned foods, soup, bread and frozen meals.

Drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages (e.g. regular soft drinks, energy or sports drinks, fruit drinks or sweetened coffee and tea). Pick fruit as a naturally sweet dessert or snack most of the time instead of eating cookies, cakes, pies and ice cream. Try the Angel Food Pastry with Fresh Berries and Whipped Cream (recipe below) for a quick and healthier dessert option.

Walk for your heart

One of the most effective forms of exercise to achieve heart health is walking. Walking does not require any special skills. It is

safe, free, requires no equipment and costs nothing to get started. The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend at least 150 minutes per week of moderate physical activity for adults.

One way to achieve 150 minutes per week is to do 30 minutes of brisk walking (at least 2.5 miles per hour) for 5 days of the week. If you are short on time, break up your brisk walks into shorter sessions. If you are just starting to get active, don't worry about reaching 150 minutes per week just yet. Set a reachable goal and work up toward the recommended amount. Just remember to move more and sit less during the day.

If you have a chronic condition or disability, talk with your healthcare provider about what types and amounts of physical activity are right for you before making too many changes.

Resources:

- *Heart Disease Fact Sheet. Centers for Disease Control.* www.cdc.gov/dhbsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_heart_disease.htm
- *The American Heart Association's Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations.* American Heart Association. www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/aha-diet-and-lifestyle-recommendations
- *American Heart Association Recommendations for Physical Activity in Adults and Kids.* American Heart Association. www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/walking



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Kayla Colgrove, MS, RDN, ACSM-CPT, Extension Educator, Lancaster Co.

ANGEL FOOD PASTRY WITH FRESH BERRIES AND WHIPPED CREAM

(1 Serving)

- 1 ounce angel food cake mix (3 tablespoons)
- 1/8 cup yogurt, low-fat vanilla (2 tablespoons)
- 1/8 cup raspberries (about 3)
- 2 strawberries, sliced
- 1 tablespoon lite whipped topping (can use 1-2 tablespoons)

1. Scoop 3 tablespoons of angel food cake mix into a microwave-safe cup or mug.
2. Add 2 tablespoons of vanilla yogurt and stir.
3. Place in the center of the microwave oven and microwave for 1 minute.
4. Take out of microwave and let cool for 1 minute.
5. Using a knife, cut around the sides of the cup to loosen the cake and "dump" it on a plate.
6. Dollop 1 tablespoon of whipped topping on top of the cake.
7. Sprinkle raspberries around the angel food cake and add sliced strawberries to top.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories 161, Total Fat 2g, Saturated Fat 1g, Cholesterol 2mg, Sodium 259mg, Total Carbohydrate 34g, Dietary Fiber 2g, Sugars 25g, Protein 4g

Source: *What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl from USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion.*



Kayla Colgrove, Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County