

Words on Wellness

Your extension connection to nutrition and fitness

Heart Health: Will Vitamins Help?

It's February when we are drawn to all 'things of the heart' including Heart Disease Awareness month. Because heart disease is the leading cause of death in Iowa, it's a good time to make sure we are aware of the risks. There are many factors that contribute to a person's risk for heart disease. Some, like genetics, are not controllable. But lifestyle behaviors such as physical activity and a healthful diet are within your control and can reduce your risk. One area of study is how vitamins and minerals affect the risk of heart attack.

Will taking B vitamins help? At one time researchers thought folic acid lowered the risk of heart attack. Higher blood levels of the amino acid homocysteine were associated with increased risk of heart attack. Because folic acid lowered homocysteine levels in the blood, it was thought it improved heart health. However, more recent research shows that people who took B vitamins were just as likely as those taking a placebo (e.g. "sugar pill") to suffer heart attacks. Current research indicates that homocysteine may be a marker of heart attack rather than a cause. So, despite folic acid's role in lowering homocysteine levels it does not lower the risk of heart attack.

What about multivitamins? The Women's Health Initiative studies, which followed more than 161,000 people for eight years, showed that those who took multivitamins were as likely to suffer strokes and heart attacks as those who didn't take multivitamins.

What does improve heart health? The American Heart Association reminds us of 'Life's Simple Seven,' everyday things to do to improve heart health in seven categories:

- Manage Blood Pressure
- Lose Weight
- Get Active
- Reduce Blood Sugar
- Control Cholesterol
- Stop Smoking
- Eat Better

You can complete a simple online assessment called My Life Check at <http://mylifecheck.heart.org/> to see how you're doing in each of these seven areas and learn ways to make everyday changes to improve heart health.

Source: Nutrition Action Newsletter July/August 2010, American Heart Association



Mexican Chicken Soup

A good-for-your-heart soup featuring vegetables, beans and chicken. You can reduce the amount of sodium by using reduced-salt or salt-free canned vegetables.

Ingredients:

- 2 15-ounce cans diced tomatoes (Mexican-style)
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups frozen corn or 1 15-ounce can corn, drained and rinsed
- 1 14.5-ounce can sodium-reduced chicken broth or 2 cups Homemade Chicken Broth
- 2 cloves garlic, minced or ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast

Instructions:

1. Add tomatoes, beans, corn, broth, garlic, chili powder, cumin (if desired), and pepper in large saucepan.
2. Remove the chicken and place on a plate; use forks to shred the chicken. Return the shredded chicken to soup.
3. Serve with choice of garnishes, such as * baked tortilla chips, chopped cilantro, low fat shredded cheese, fat-free sour cream.

Yield: 8 1-cup servings.

Per Serving: 180 calories, 1.5 g fat, 635 mg sodium, 24 g carbohydrate, 5.2 g fiber, 18.7 g protein

From: ISU Extension's Healthy and Homemade 2011 Nutrition and Fitness Calendar and Spend Smart Eat Smart website, <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings/> (*Recipes can be found at this site)



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Call toll-free Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. - noon and 1 - 4 p.m.

1-800-262-3804 (in Iowa)

1-800-854-1678 (in Minnesota)

1-800-735-2942 (Relay Iowa phone linkage for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals)

OR answer@iastate.edu

www.extension.iastate.edu

Valentines Day: Celebrate in Good Health

1. Going out to dinner? Think smaller portion sizes. Divide your meal and share it or ask for a take-home container.

2. Chocolate? Dark chocolate has more antioxidants than milk chocolate. Some studies have shown the antioxidants in dark chocolate may help prevent heart disease. Indulge in flavor, not quantity.

3. Gifts for your sweetie, your children or your grandchildren? Think about ways to get them moving: a jump rope, water bottle, hand held weights, comfortable clothes for physical activity, or an 'exergame' (video games that involvement movement, like Wii Fit®). While no more than two hours of 'screen time' is recommended for children, research has shown that video games promoting physical activity can be beneficial. If your valentine will be playing video games, find games that increase their energy expenditure, heart rate, and perceived exertion. Research has shown that children who played certain video games burned:

- 125 calories in 15 minutes while boxing
- 92 calories in 15 minutes while playing tennis
- 77 calories in 15 minutes while bowling

For more information on video games and children, access the free publications from The Science of Parenting through the ISU Extension publications website:

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/>

Video Games and Other Media; Pros and Cons and Obesity and Overuse of Electronic Media



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What's for Dinner?

Isn't that the almost-daily question? Wouldn't it be great to be handed a menu with all the preparation steps outlined? ISU Extension's Food Safety website provides just that. A simple dinner menu with kid-appeal foods, recipes, preparations steps that ensure the food will be prepared safely, a grocery list, and even a video to watch the meal preparation are all included. Tips to ensure food is handled safely from the grocery store to cooking, to storing leftovers are outlined. Enjoy an easy meal tonight!

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety/video/dinner.htm>