

HERKIMER COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING

NUTRITION NEWS

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Healthy Heart Month

February is Health Heart Month. In the midst of the Covid pandemic, there are some new developments related to Covid and heart health. For some people who have had Covid, lingering heart problems can complicate their recovery. It is worth mentioning that not everyone that contracts Covid will have heart problems. Actually, the percentage is quite small.

Covid can damage the heart muscle, thereby affecting heart function. One reason for this is the high levels of inflammation that are seen in the body during an infection. As the body's immune system fights off the virus, the inflammatory process can damage some healthy tissues as well, including the heart.

Infection from the coronavirus can also affect the inner surfaces of veins and arteries, which can cause blood vessel inflammation and damage to very small blood vessels. This can then compromise blood flow to the heart or other parts of the body.

After you have had Covid, if you are experiencing a rapid heartbeat or palpitations, you should contact your doctor. A temporary increase in heart rate can be caused by a number of different factors, including dehydration. Make sure you are drinking adequate fluids, especially if you have a fever. Symptoms of a rapid or irregular heart rhythm may include a feeling of your heart beating rapidly in your chest, feeling lightheaded or dizzy especially when standing, and chest discomfort.

Lastly, a diagnosis of heart failure after Covid is rare. However, if you a prolonged period of shortness of breath, fatigue, or leg swelling, you should be evaluated by your general physician, who may or may not decide to refer you to a cardiologist.



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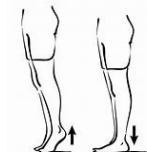
INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

THE DASH DIET	2
LOW SODIUM TIPS	3
TURKEY GAR-BANZO BEAN KALE SOUP	4

Monthly Exercise Heel Raise

Helps with walking and climbing stairs.

1. With fingertips on something solid to help balance, lift both heels off the floor and stand on your toes for three seconds, then slowly lower your heels to the floor
2. Repeat 5 times.



As most of us now realize, diet can impact your risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Being conscious of your overall intake, as well as your sodium intake, can improve your blood pressure. It may also affect the risk of developing arteriosclerosis. One diet that has been around for years and is still thought to be effective in lowering your risk of cardiovascular disease is the DASH diet. Many physicians continue to recommend the DASH diet to their patients, specifically to bring one's blood pressure under control.

DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) focuses on including foods that are low in sodium. It also incorporates foods that are rich in potassium, magnesium, and calcium, as these nutrients are also believed to play a role in maintaining a healthy blood pressure. The DASH diet features foods such as vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy products, whole grains, fish, poultry, and nuts. It also recommends limiting your intake of red meats, sweets, and sugary beverages. It is not surprising that this diet is similar to the general recommendations put forth to reduce your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancers.

You can slowly incorporate the DASH diet into your current dietary habits. Here are some tips to making a gradual, but hopefully lasting, change.

- * Add a vegetable or fruit serving at lunch and dinner.
- * Use only half the butter or margarine that you use now.
- * Get added nutrients such as the B vitamins by choosing whole grain foods, including whole wheat bread or whole grain cereals.

- * Spread out the servings: have two servings of fruits or vegetables at each meal, or add fruits as snacks.
- * Treat meat as one part of the meal, instead of the focus. Try casseroles, pastas, and stir-fry dishes. Try to have two meatless meals each week.
- * Use fruits or low fat foods such as yogurt as desserts or snacks.

If you're also trying to lose weight while on the DASH diet, keep these calorie saving tips in mind:

- ◆ Use low fat condiments, such as low fat or lite salad dressings.
- ◆ Eat smaller portions—cut back gradually.
- ◆ Choose low fat or fat free dairy products to reduce your total fat intake.
- ◆ Limit foods with lots of added sugars, such as pies, flavored yogurts, candy bars, ice cream, sherbet, regular soft drinks, and fruit drinks.
- ◆ Eat fruits canned in their own juices as opposed to those canned in heavy syrups.
- ◆ Snack on fruit, vegetables sticks, unbuttered popcorn, or bread sticks.
- ◆ Drink water, seltzer, or club soda.

Even simple changes such as reducing your overall intake (portion sizes) can significantly reduce your blood pressure.



Perhaps the most common dietary recommendation from physicians in the spectrum of cardiovascular disease is to limit your sodium intake. There is a lot of hidden sodium in foods that you may not even consider “salty.” Most “convenience” foods have more sodium in them than you may realize. For example, given a choice between a packet of instant oatmeal and making your own on the stovetop, the healthier option would be to cook your own. Here are some additional suggestions for lowering your sodium intake.

- ◆ Prepare foods at home so you can control the amount of sodium content in them.
- ◆ Do not salt food at the table.
- ◆ Cook without mixes and “instant” products that already contain salt or additives with sodium.
- ◆ Select no sodium or low sodium canned foods, such as soups, vegetables, and tuna.
- ◆ Season foods with herbs, spices, garlic, onions, peppers, and lemon or lime juice to add flavor.

Limiting your fat intake can also improve your cardiovascular health. It is still recommended that Americans consume about 20% of their total caloric intake from fats. Fats are necessary for many body processes, but in excess can greatly increase your risk of developing chronic conditions. Saturated fats (those generally coming from animal sources) are of the highest concern in terms of cardiovascular disease. Here are some general tips for limiting your fat intake:

- ◆ Choose skim or 1% milk and milk products.
- ◆ Choose lean meats, fish, and poultry. Limit your portion to 3-4 ounces, which is the size of a deck of cards. Other low fat protein sources include eggs, peas, beans, and soy products.

- ◆ Try hummus, guacamole, or Greek yogurt as a dip for vegetables, in place of high fat salad dressings. Hummus can also replace high fat mayonnaise on a sandwich.
- ◆ Refrigerate soups, gravies, and stews, and remove the hardened fat before eating.
- ◆ Bake, broil, or grill meats on a rack that allows fat to drip from the meat. Avoid frying meats.
- ◆ Sprinkle lemon juice and herbs and spices on your cooked vegetables for flavor instead of cheese, butter, or cream based sauces.
- ◆ Replace sour cream on your baked potato with plain, nonfat yogurt, or salsa.
- ◆ Select fruit, angel food cake, low fat yogurt, sherbet, or sorbet for dessert instead of high fat cookies, pies, and cakes.

Remember, even small changes can have lasting impacts! Strive to incorporate even one or two of these changes into your daily routine and enjoy the benefits of a healthier lifestyle!



Turkey Garbanzo Bean and Kale Soup

16 ounces whole wheat pasta shells
1 tbs extra virgin olive oil
1 pound ground turkey
1 cup chopped onion
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 tbs chopped fresh sage
2 tbs chopped fresh rosemary
3 (14 ounce) cans chicken broth (you can use low sodium)
3/4 cup water

1 (15 ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed

1/3 cup tomato paste

2 cups roughly chopped kale

Salt and pepper to taste

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Stir in the pasta, and return to a boil. Boil, stirring occasionally, until cooked through but still firm to the bite, about 12-15 minutes. Drain well.

Heat olive oil in a large soup pot; add turkey, onion, and garlic. Cook over medium heat until meat browns and onion is soft, about 5 minutes. Stir in sage and rosemary and cook for about 1 minute, do not allow herbs to brown. Pour the broth and water into the pot along with the garbanzo beans and tomato paste. Bring to a boil and add kale. Simmer until kale softens, about 5 minutes. Season soup with salt and pepper.

To serve, place a serving of cooked pasta in the bottom of a soup bowl and ladle hot soup over it.

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