

# NUTRITION NEWS

WRITTEN BY: SHANNON DAVIS, RD, CDN

LAYOUT BY: LAEKEN FOX

FEBRUARY 2023

## Healthy Heart Month



February is Heart Month! This month is dedicated to cardiac health awareness and encompasses many conditions, including heart attacks, strokes, and high blood pressure (hypertension).

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. Cardiovascular disease is also the global leading cause of death. Cardiovascular disease claims more lives than all forms of cancer combined. It is for these reasons and more that monitoring our cardiac health and making sensible choices is so important. Here are some more sobering statistics regarding cardiac health.

- ◆ Heart disease accounts for 1 in 7 deaths in the United States.
- ◆ Someone in the US dies from heart disease about once every 90 seconds.
- ◆ From 2001 to 2011, the death rate from heart disease had fallen about 39%.

- ◆ Strokes are the number 5 cause of death in the United States.
- ◆ More women than men die of heart disease every year.
- ◆ Women are less likely than men to receive appropriate treatment after a heart attack.
- ◆ About one in three US adults (68 million people) have high blood pressure.
- ◆ Only half of US adults diagnosed with high blood pressure have it under good control.
- ◆ Almost 30% of American adults have prehypertension blood pressure that is higher than normal but not yet in the high blood pressure range.
- ◆ About one in six adults in the US has high total cholesterol.



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

COVID AND HEART HEALTH	2
HEALTHY HEART DIET	3
MEDITERRANEAN CHICKEN	4

### Monthly Exercise:

#### Abdominal Contractions

While taking a deep breath, tighten the muscles of abdomen.

Hold in this position for three breaths.

Do 10 repetitions.

Two years into the pandemic, there are still concerns about the effects of Covid on heart health. Johns Hopkins recently published an article about some of the lingering cardiovascular effects that are possible after a Covid infection. Here some of the more common questions and answers.

### **Can Covid 19 damage the heart?**

Although Covid is primarily a respiratory or lung disease, the heart can also be impacted. This can be for a number of different reasons, including lack of oxygen, myocarditis (an inflammation of the heart), and stress cardiomyopathy (a heart muscle disorder that affects the heart's ability to pump blood effectively). The most serious cardiovascular complication after Covid is a "cytokine storm." This is when the body's own immune system response causes inflammation that overwhelms the body, destroying healthy tissue and damaging organs, including the kidneys, liver, and heart. This generally happens very closely to the infection time.

### **Can Covid affect heart rate?**

After you have had Covid, it is not unusual to experience a rapid heartbeat or palpitations. A temporary increase can be caused by a number of things, including dehydration. However, you should contact your doctor if you have palpitations (feeling your heart beat rapidly or irregularly in your chest) feelings of lightheadedness or dizziness (especially when standing), or chest discomfort.

### **How can I tell if I have developed a heart problem after a Covid infection?**

Shortness of breath, chest pain, or palpitations are common after Covid. The severity of the symptoms may lead you to

the doctor. A diagnosis of heart failure after Covid is rare. But if you have shortness of breath or leg swelling (and these are new symptoms), you should contact your doctor who may have you evaluated by a cardiologist. Lingering chest pain is another common post Covid complaint. It may be nothing serious, but if it is severe or persistent and is accompanied by nausea, shortness of breath, or lightheadedness, you should see a doctor. These could point to signs of a heart attack. Lastly, if you have chest pain when you inhale, you might have lung inflammation. Sudden, severe chest pain could also be a sign of a blood clot in your lungs.

### **Can Covid symptoms mimic a heart attack?**

Yes! People with Covid can have symptoms similar to those of a heart attack, including chest pain, shortness of breath, and changes on their echocardiogram. But when these patients go for further testing, there is no evidence of a major blockage in the heart's blood vessels, which would indicate a heart attack in progress. People with signs and symptoms of a heart attack should seek urgent medical attention and not manage these symptoms at home.

Lastly, people who have had a heart attack generally have elevated troponin levels. Blood tests have shown that during a Covid infection, some individuals also have elevated levels of troponin. This can also be a sign of damaged heart tissue.



Hypertension is the most common cardiovascular complication. It may also be the most preventable. Diet, exercise, and a healthy weight are paramount to preventing or managing hypertension.

Sodium in the diet is closely associated with hypertension. However, while diet plays a role in developing hypertension, it is important to recognize that not everyone with elevated blood pressure will experience an improved blood pressure if they lower their sodium intake. While a diet moderate in sodium offers many benefits, only certain individuals (who are considered "sodium sensitive") will see lower blood pressure after cutting down on their salt intake. The average American consumes almost 4000 mg of sodium daily. Typical sodium restrictions that are recommended by physicians range from 2000 to 3000 mg daily. Keep in mind that in addition to obviously salty foods, such as canned products or cured meats, there is a lot of hidden sodium in convenience foods. In general, if a food is easy to prepare, chances are it is also high in sodium.

Sodium isn't the only nutrient that can impact your cardiovascular health. Reducing your total fat intake, saturated fat intake, and increasing your fiber can also have positive consequences. Here are some simple changes that can be made to your current diet that may have long lasting effects.

- \* Try whole grain flours to enhance the flavors of baked goods made with less fat and fewer or no cholesterol containing ingredients.
- \* Replace whole milk with low fat or skim milk in puddings, soups, and baked good.
- \* Substitute plain low fat yogurt or low fat cottage cheese for sour cream or mayonnaise.
- \* Steam, boil, bake, or microwave vegetables.

- \* Try flavored vinegars or lemon juice on salads instead of heavy dressings.
- \* Choose lean cuts of meat or trim the fat before preparing; remove the skin from poultry before cooking.
- \* Roast, bake, broil, or simmer meat and poultry as opposed to frying.
- \* Cook meat or poultry on a rack and allow the fat to drip off.
- \* Chill meat and poultry broth until the fat is solid; remove before using.
- \* Limit egg yolks to one when making scrambled eggs.
- \* Try substituting egg whites in recipes calling for whole eggs.

Adding exercise can also help you maintain a health weight. Here are a few simple tips to get your heart rate up and your blood pressure down!

- ◆ Walk around the outside aisles of the grocery store before shopping.
- ◆ Make several trips up and down the stairs to do laundry or other household chores.
- ◆ Mow the lawn by hand.
- ◆ Take your dog for a nice long walk.
- ◆ Pace around your house while talking on the telephone.
- ◆ Tour a museum or zoo.

Happy,  
Valentine's  
Day

Here is a heart healthy recipe for you to try!

### **Mediterranean Chicken**

2 tbs white wine  
2 tsp olive oil  
6 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1/2 cup diced onion  
3 cups tomatoes, chopped  
1/2 cup white wine  
2 tsp chopped fresh thyme

1 tbs chopped fresh basil

1/2 cup Kalamata olives

1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Salt and pepper to taste

Heat white wine and oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add chicken and cook until golden. About 4 to 6 minutes on each side. Remove chicken from skillet and set aside.

Add garlic to pan droppings; saute for 30 seconds. Add onion; cook and stir until onions are tender, about 3 minutes. Add tomatoes and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and add 1/2 cup white wine; simmer for 10 minutes. Add thyme and basil and simmer for 5 more minutes.

Return chicken to skillet, cover, and cook over low heat until the chicken is cooked through and no longer pink inside. Add olives and parsley; cook for 1 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

### **HEAP**

If you received HEAP last year but have not yet received an application for this year, please call our Office at 867-1195.

If you did not receive HEAP last year but want to apply this year, please call our Office at 867-1195.

### **HERKIMER COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING**

109 Mary St., Herkimer, NY 13350

Phone: 315-867-1121

Fax: 315-867-1448

Email: [hcofa@herkimercounty.org](mailto:hcofa@herkimercounty.org)

Web: [www.herkimercounty.org](http://www.herkimercounty.org); then 'departments' then 'Office for the Aging'

Funding for this newsletter is from the NYS  
Office for the Aging & Herkimer County

