



BalanceWorks® Newsletter

February 2015 | Written by the work/life experts at eni



Focus On: Heart Health

In honor of American Heart Month, eni once again brings you information on protecting the hardest working muscle in your body – your heart! Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States, which is why it is so important to understand how to keep your heart healthy.

First let's review the signs of a "cardiac event" (often called a heart attack). Signs of a heart attack vary greatly from person to person and often present differently in men and women. However, some general signs of a heart attack include Chest pain or discomfort, pain in your arms, left shoulder, neck, jaw, back, or even stomach, shortness of breath, lightheadedness, fast or abnormal heartbeats, nausea, breaking out in cold sweat, and an extreme feeling of tiredness. If you experience one or more of these symptoms and think you might be having a heart attack, get to the emergency room right away as the sooner you get help for a cardiac event the more likely you are to survive it. It's also important to remember that the symptoms listed above do not necessarily indicate a heart attack and can actually be signs of other conditions such as gas or anxiety.

There are many factors that contribute to your overall heart disease risk. There

are a few risk factors that can't be changed such as age, gender, and heredity. However, the majority of risk factors are manageable and by leading a healthy lifestyle you can significantly lower your risk for heart disease.

Protect your heart by adhering to the following healthy guidelines:

Quit Smoking

WebMD reports that roughly 1 out of 5 deaths from heart disease are directly related to smoking and that people who smoke are two to four times more likely to get heart disease. The good news is that the positive benefits begin immediately after smoking your last cigarette and studies show that if you quit smoking, you cut your risk of having a heart attack in half within a year.

Monitor Cholesterol

The American Heart Association warns that "as your blood cholesterol rises, so does your risk of coronary heart disease." When too much LDL (bad) cholesterol circulates in the blood, it can slowly build up in the inner walls of the arteries that feed the heart and can form a thick, hard deposit called plaque that can narrow the arteries and make them less flexible. Thankfully you can keep your cholesterol levels low by limiting your intake of foods such as processed meat and fatty cuts of

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red meat, fried food, oils high in saturated fat, egg yolks, high fat dairy products, and donuts. There are several delicious foods that actually lower cholesterol, including avocados, salmon, walnuts, almonds, garlic, oatmeal, blueberries, grapes, broccoli, olive oil, and soy products.

Control Blood Pressure

The CDC reports that 1 out of every 3 American adults suffers from high blood pressure, making it one of the most common manageable risk factors for heart disease. If you do have high blood pressure, try to control it through a healthy diet low in salt and high in calcium, magnesium, and potassium. Some foods that can help lower blood pressure include yogurt, kiwi, bananas, kale, sweet potatoes, and quinoa. It is also important to include plenty of exercise when trying to control blood pressure naturally. Finally, there are also safe and effective blood pressure medications that may be necessary if your condition cannot be controlled naturally.

Manage Diabetes

The American Diabetes Association reports that “people with diabetes have a higher-than-average risk of having a heart attack or stroke”. If you have diabetes the most important thing you can do to manage your condition is to make sure that you control your sugar. Follow the diet recommended by your doctor; test your sugar regularly, and take insulin or any other prescribed medications on time.

Eat Right

As we have learned, eating poorly can lead to conditions such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, which are major risk factors for heart disease. Strive for a diet that is high in vitamins and antioxidants. Fill up on a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy products, lean meats such as chicken and fish, egg whites, and nuts. Limit your consumption of food high in trans and

saturated fat, cholesterol, sugar, and salt.

Exercise

Your heart is a muscle so in order to keep it healthy and strong you have to exercise it! Healthline reports that “Living a sedentary, or inactive, lifestyle has consistently been one of the top five risk factors for heart disease.” The American Heart Association recommends all adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week. This breaks down to a very manageable 30 minutes, 5 times per week. Physical activity includes walking, running, swimming biking, dancing, or anything that gets your heart pumping. Also, sitting for long periods of time can also have adverse effects on your heart so be sure to get up and move around for at least 10 minutes every hour.

Maintain a Healthy Weight

Being significantly overweight puts you at risk for heart disease because carrying excess body fat, especially around the waist, increases the heart’s workload. In addition, obesity is often linked to other risk factors, such as high cholesterol, high triglyceride levels, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Be sure to check your body mass index (BMI) to make sure that it is within a normal healthy range. If your BMI is high, start eating healthier and make time to exercise in order to lower your weight, thereby reducing the strain on your heart.

Remember that your Personal Assistant is available to provide information on heart healthy recipes, workout ideas, and much more!

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