



# BalanceWorks® Newsletter

February 2016 | Written by the work/life experts at eni



## Spotlight on Your Heart

In honor of American Heart Month, eni is pleased to bring you our annual newsletter on heart health. Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States, which is why we provide tips each February on keeping 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
- Extreme fatigue

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 increasing age. Also, before age 55, men are at a greater risk for heart attacks than women, but after that the risk begins to even out. Finally, your risk of heart disease increases if your father or a brother was diagnosed before age 55, or if your mother or a sister was diagnosed before age 65 years of age.

However, the majority of heart disease risk factors are manageable. By leading a healthy lifestyle you can significantly lower your risk for heart disease! This February, take stock of your overall health and protect your heart by adhering to the following guidelines:

### Quit Smoking

Heart attacks are more common in smokers than in nonsmokers because nicotine constricts your blood vessels, and carbon monoxide can damage their inner lining, making them more susceptible to atherosclerosis. 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!

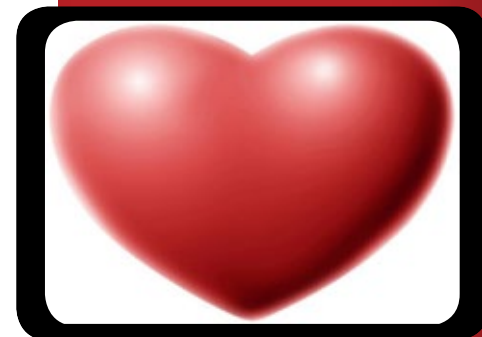
### Control Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is the most common heart disease risk factor as almost 1 in 3 Americans suffer from hypertension.

For more information or support on heart health, contact the work/life experts at BalanceWorks® by calling:

**1.800.327.2255**

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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 bananas, spinach, yogurt, kiwi, 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.

### Monitor Cholesterol

The risk for heart disease increases as your total amount of cholesterol increases. 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 red meat, fried food, oils high in saturated fat, egg yolks, high fat dairy products, anything with trans fat, and baked goods. There are several delicious foods that actually lower cholesterol, including avocados, salmon, walnuts, almonds, garlic, oatmeal, blueberries, grapes, broccoli, olive oil, and soy products.

### Manage Diabetes

If not properly controlled, diabetes can contribute to significant heart damage. 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

It's important to reiterate that 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

Just like the other muscles in your body, your heart needs exercise to stay strong! WebMD reports that people who don't exercise have higher rates of death and heart disease compared to people who perform even mild to moderate amounts of physical activity. Most adults should aim for 30 minutes of moderate exercise 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. Always consult your doctor before beginning a new workout plan.

### 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 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 additional information on workout ideas, heart healthy recipes, and much more!***

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