



# BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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## Heart Health

In honor of American Heart Month, eni is pleased to once again bring you our annual newsletter on heart health. Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), the death rate from heart disease has fallen 38% since 2003, but the burden and risk factors remain high, which is why we provide tips each February to help keep your heart healthy.

Although signs of a “cardiac event” (heart attack) vary greatly and often present very differently in men and woman, it’s important to recognize general symptoms. A few of the more common 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, seek emergency medical assistance right away. Remember, the sooner you get help the more likely you are to survive. It’s also important to point out that the symptoms above do not

necessarily indicate a heart attack and can actually be signs of other conditions such as anxiety or gas.

There are a variety of 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 family history. However, many risk factors are entirely manageable and by leading a healthy lifestyle you can significantly reduce your risk.

Let’s take a look at some general guidelines that can help lower your heart disease risk.

### Quit Smoking

According to the AHA, a smokers’ risk of developing coronary heart disease is much higher than that of nonsmokers. The good news is that the positive benefits begin immediately after smoking your last cigarette. Within 24 hours of quitting you decrease your heart disease risk, within a year of quitting, your risk is cut in half, and within 15 years of quitting your risk becomes the same as a non-smokers.

### Monitor Cholesterol

As blood cholesterol rises, so does risk of heart disease. The key to healthy cholesterol levels is keeping LDL (bad) cholesterol low, HDL (good) cholesterol high, and triglyceride levels low.

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

**1.800.327.2255**

eni’s BalanceWorks® program is a confidential 24/7 service provided by your employer to help achieve work/life balance.





Thankfully you can keep your cholesterol levels in check by limiting foods such as processed meat and fatty cuts of red meat, fried food, oils high in saturated fat, high fat dairy products, anything with trans fat, and baked goods. It's also a good idea to incorporate the following foods into your diet that can actually help lower cholesterol, including avocados, salmon, walnuts, almonds, garlic, oatmeal, blueberries, grapes, broccoli, and olive oil.

### Control Blood Pressure

The AHA states that high blood pressure increases the heart's workload, causing the heart muscle to thicken and become stiffer, which can increase your risk for heart disease. A healthy diet low in salt and high in calcium, magnesium, and potassium can help prevent and/or control high blood pressure. It's also a good idea to incorporate food into your diet that can help lower blood pressure including bananas, spinach, yogurt, kiwi, sweet potatoes, and quinoa. Exercise is also a key factor when trying to control blood pressure naturally.

If you do suffer from high cholesterol or high blood pressure be sure to consult with your doctor on the best treatment plan for your condition.

### Manage Diabetes

Diabetes is a serious risk factor for heart disease. If you have diabetes the most important thing you can do to manage your condition is to control your sugar. It is extremely important to work with your doctor on a treatment plan. Follow the diet and exercise program recommended by your doctor, test your sugar regularly, and take insulin or any other prescribed medications on time.

### Maintain a Healthy Weight

Being significantly overweight increases the risk for heart disease as carrying excess body fat, especially around the waist, increases the heart's workload. In addition, obesity also raises the risk for factors, such

as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Eating a healthy diet and making time for exercise are key components in reaching a healthy weight and body mass index.

### Get Active

Remember that your heart is the hardest working muscle in your body, so it's important to keep it strong! Regular, moderate-to-vigorous physical activity helps reduce the risk of heart disease itself and the risk of contributing risk factors such as high blood pressure. The AHA recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity at least 5 days per week or at least 25 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity at least 3 days 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 every hour. Always consult your doctor before beginning a new workout plan.

### Eat Right

It's important to reiterate that poor eating habits can contribute to heart disease risk factors such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Aim for a diet that is high in vitamins and antioxidants and low in trans and saturated fat, cholesterol, sugar, and salt. A good rule of thumb is to include a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy products, lean meats such as chicken and fish, egg whites, olive oil, and nuts in your diet.

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

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