

STATE OF DELAWARE

Life Lines

Provided by the State of Delaware Group Health Insurance Program for their employees and their families

VOL. 29, NO. 2

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

FEBRUARY 2009



THE ODDS ARE IN YOUR FAVOR

Risk factors for heart disease you can control

When it comes to heart disease, there are more than twice as many risk factors that you can do something about compared to those that are out of your control.

You can lower your risk if you:

- Don't smoke.
- Stay at a healthy body weight.
- Limit alcohol to no more than two drinks per day for men; one drink for women.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise every day.
- Control your blood pressure. Normal is 119/79 or below.
- Limit your daily salt intake to 2,300 mg sodium per day to help control blood pressure.
- Control cholesterol. Exercise can help raise HDL (good cholesterol). Limit animal fats and avoid trans fats to help lower LDL (bad cholesterol).
- If you have diabetes, work with your doctor to control it.

Risk factors out of your control

Getting older increases everyone's risk. For men it's usually around age 40 and for women after menopause. If heart disease runs in your family, you may also be at higher risk.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

DASH TO Lower blood pressure

Controlling your blood pressure through diet and exercise is one of the best things you can do to protect your heart.

The DASH Diet (Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension) is an eating plan that can help lower blood pressure. It includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, and other low-sodium foods.

To learn more, ask your doctor or Registered Dietitian about the DASH diet or visit the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Website at www.nhlbi.nih.gov.

Burn Awareness
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The **10** best foods for your heart



- 1. Spinach and other dark, leafy greens** — high in folic acid, which may reduce heart attack risk, as well as potassium (helps control blood pressure), and fiber (helps lower cholesterol).
- 2. Fish and shellfish** — Fatty fish like salmon and mackerel are excellent sources of the omega-3 fatty acids that may prevent blood platelets from sticking together and may protect against irregular heartbeats.
- 3. Dried beans and peas** — packed with potassium, protein, and cholesterol-lowering soluble fiber.
- 4. Watermelon and cantaloupe** — full of antioxidants, potassium, and fiber.
- 5. Soy protein** — can help lower cholesterol.
- 6. Oatmeal and barley** — Soluble fiber helps rid your body of cholesterol and helps control blood sugar levels.
- 7. Garlic and onions** — Garlic can help lower cholesterol and keep blood platelets from sticking together. Onions do, too, but not as much.
- 8. Sweet potatoes** — high in vitamin A and potassium.
- 9. Avocados** — high in fiber and monounsaturated fats.
- 10. Nonfat milk** — good source of calcium, potassium, and nonfat protein.

Source: Robin Spence, Dietitian, Union Memorial Hospital, Baltimore, MD

Fresh green beans with tomatoes & oregano

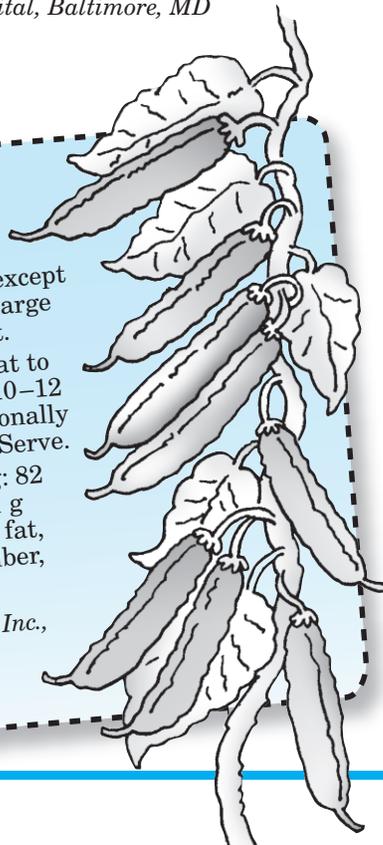
- 1 can (14½ oz.) stewed tomatoes (use tomatoes and juice)
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. dried onion flakes
- 2 tsp. minced garlic
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 1½ tsp. oregano
- 1 lb. fresh green beans, stems removed

Bring all ingredients except beans to a full boil in a large saucepan over high heat.

Add beans, reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 10–12 minutes, stirring occasionally until beans are tender. Serve.

Serves 6. Per serving: 82 calories, 2 g protein, 11 g carbohydrate, 5 g total fat, 1 g saturated fat, 4 g fiber, 279 mg sodium.

Source: Dream Dinners, Inc., www.dreamdinners.com



At the market

Whenver possible, choose fresh foods over canned, boxed, or frozen items, which can have added sugar and salt.

Too much salt can be a problem for people with high blood pressure, and added sugar means unneeded calories.

Smart Living



Cloves, oregano, and cinnamon can freshen your breath without alcohol, preservatives, or artificial colors.

MIDDLE-AGE SPREAD

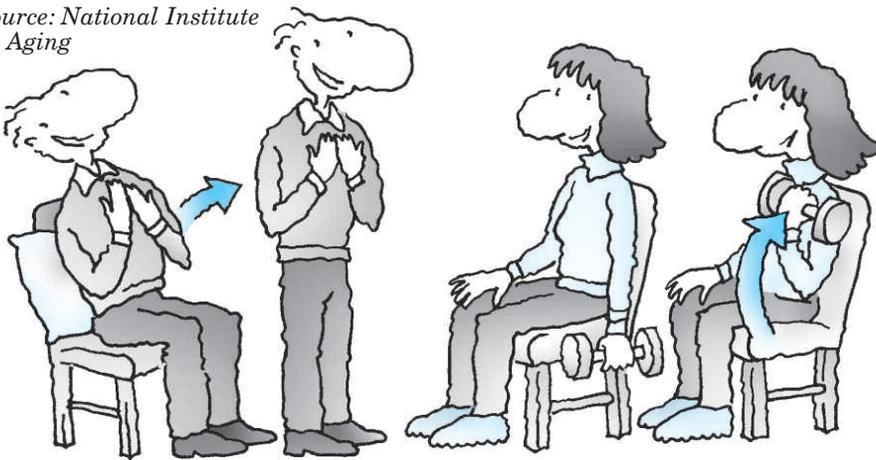
Strong muscles keep you young

Weight training or resistance exercise can help fight the age-related muscle loss that starts to affect both men and women in their 40s and 50s.

Some pointers to get you started:

- **Target the big muscles around the thighs**, arms, shoulders, and back.
- **Start with a weight light enough that you can lift it eight to 12 times** in good form before you need to rest. Slowly increase the weight as you get stronger.
- **Chair stands and stomach curls** use your own body weight and don't require additional weights.
- **Take at least one day off between weight training sessions** to let your muscles recover. Muscle soreness for a few days is normal. You're overdoing it, however, if you have pulled muscles or sore joints, or are exhausted afterwards.
- **Always remember to stretch gently before and after lifting weights**, to keep your joints flexible.
- **Get your doctor's OK to start a strength-training program** if you've been inactive for a long time or have other health conditions.

Source: National Institute on Aging



Chair stand strengthens stomach and thighs.

Biceps curl builds upper arm muscles.

Log on to www.niapublications.org/exercisebook/chapter4_strength.htm for complete instructions on how to do these strength-training exercises.

MOTIVATION TIP

Focus on your short-term goals

Think about the immediate rewards of physical activity, like the simple pleasure of being active and the boost in energy and self-esteem that most people feel afterwards. You'll enjoy the workout more, and that will make it easier to get moving next time, says Anne Jarret, MD, assistant professor of medicine at the University of Michigan.

Although weight loss and preventing disease are long-term benefits of exercise, it may be hard to stay motivated when the payoff is too far in the future.

Source: *esperanza* magazine, Spring 2008, www.hopetocope.com

WALKING

Why it's the 8th wonder of the world

1. **It can prevent or delay the impact of several chronic diseases**, including heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and arthritis.
2. **You can do it at any age.** In fact, it's the only exercise in which participation rates don't decrease when people reach middle age and older.
3. **It's inexpensive and easy.** You don't need a special facility or equipment, just a sturdy and comfortable pair of shoes.
4. **It comes naturally, and you can do it in connection with other activities** like walking to work, taking the dog out, or circling the mall before shopping.
5. **It's a safe, low-impact workout**, even for people with arthritis.
6. **Walking briskly for one mile in 15 minutes** burns around the same number of calories as jogging for 8.5 minutes.
7. **It often becomes a stepping stone to other forms of exercise**, particularly for people who are self-conscious about exercise.
8. **It's the most popular physical activity in the U.S.**



Doc Talk

POWER TO THE PATIENT

Should mom be driving?

A daughter who brought her 78-year-old mom in for a checkup asked, “Do you think it’s OK for my mom to drive?” It was a good question. Aging can bring loss of vision and hearing, slower reflexes, memory loss, and confusion. Illness can accelerate and add to these challenges. I checked my patient’s vision and memory and sent her for a hearing test. All were normal. Even so, I asked for signs of problems driving:

- Do other drivers honk at you?
- Have you had any recent collisions?
- Do you get lost, even on roads you know?
- Do cars or people walking seem to appear out of nowhere?
- Are friends or family concerned about your driving?

In my patient’s case, the answers to all but the last of these questions was “no.” So I suggested she take a driving course for older, more experienced drivers; talk with family about what signs would cause her to stop driving; consider a driving test; and plan for how to get around without driving.

Working through the steps above — including a checkup and talking with your doctor — can help protect our own safety and the safety of those around us.

William J. Mayer, MD, MPH
Medical Editor

Do you have a subject you would like the doctor to discuss? E-mail DocTalk@HopeHealth.com.

Exercise and breast cancer

♥ Women who stay active after being diagnosed with breast cancer have a much higher chance of surviving.

In one recent study, women who walked two to three hours a week had a 64% higher survival rate than women who were inactive.

“Women undergoing treatment for breast cancer should consider exercise part of their therapy,” says Yale researcher Dr. Melinda Irwin. Staying active may also help with the increased cardiovascular risk that can accompany treatment.

Over the past 20 years, several other studies have shown that regular exercise can reduce a woman’s risk for breast cancer by up to 40%.

Source: *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, Vol. 26, pg. 3958

Personality pluses

♥ People who are active and energetic, emotionally stable, and conscientious (better informed, disciplined, organized) live an average of two to three years longer than people with personalities that tend to be more angry, fearful, and anxious.

The extra years are also independent of major health risks like smoking and obesity, say researchers at the National Institute on Aging.

Source: *Psychosomatic Medicine*, Vol. 70, pg. 621



To sleep better, exercise regularly, but complete your workout at least three hours before bedtime.

Health

Health Briefs for Busy People

Don't be shy

♥ Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about the directions for taking a prescription medication.

When a label says take “three times a day,” find out if it means you should take the medication at meal times, at three equally spaced times during a 24-hour period, or three equally spaced times during your waking hours. Most medications don’t require you to get up in the middle of the night to take them, but it’s important to double-check.

Source: *National Women’s Health Resource Center*

News from our neighbors

♥ A study from Canada reinforces the recommendation that everyone should wear a helmet when riding a bike.

The number of bike-related deaths among children dropped by more than half after an Ontario law was passed requiring bicyclists under 16 to wear helmets. Deaths among bicyclists over 16 did not change significantly over the same 12-year period.

Most states in the U.S. have laws requiring riders under 18 years old to wear helmets, but only a few require them for adults. To check the helmet laws in your state, visit www.helmets.org/helmlaws.htm.

Source: *Pediatrics*, Vol. 122, pg. 605

Road trips

♥ To prevent drowsiness, stop or switch drivers every 100 miles or two hours.

Like alcohol, drowsiness can affect vision, slow reaction time, and increase the risk of crashing, especially at night, when traffic deaths are three times higher than they are during the daytime.

Source: *National Sleep Foundation*

Got milk?

♥ If an adult or child gets a permanent tooth knocked out, your dentist may be able to save it if you act immediately. First, hold the tooth by the crown and rinse off the root only if it's dirty. Do not soak it or remove any tissue fragments. If you can, gently put the tooth into its socket. If that's not possible, put the tooth in a cup of milk and get to the dentist as quickly as you can. If all else fails, the person who lost the tooth can place it under their tongue while getting to a dentist.

Source: American Dental Association

Recycle cell phones

♥ Help protect the environment and do a good deed by recycling old cell phones that you no longer use.

The Good Deed Foundation refurbishes and sells old cell phones. Part of the proceeds go to help women and children in poverty, and part go to support efforts to stop global warming. Some of the phones are also given to seniors so they can make 911 calls.

Log on to www.gooddeedfoundation.org and follow the prompts to receive a free postage-paid envelope or collection box for community recycling efforts.

Out and about

♥ You can learn about the walkability of neighborhoods by visiting www.walkscore.com.

The free Website scores a neighborhood's walkability based on the number of businesses, services, and other destinations within walking distance of a given address.

The site also allows users to actually see the streets they could walk in certain communities.

Elementary math

♥ An easy lesson in fractions may be one way to teach kids about good nutrition. A healthy plate should include:

- ½ fruits and vegetables
- ¼ whole grains like brown rice or whole-wheat pasta
- ¼ lean protein like chicken, fish, or turkey

A balanced diet makes the chemical messengers in the brain function more efficiently, and that's important when kids are growing and brains are developing, says Catherine Kraus, a dietitian with the University of Michigan Health System.

Since young kids take their eating cues from parents, the first thing parents can do is start by being good role models.

Source: University of Michigan Health System

FISCAL FITNESS

LOVE & MONEY

Common investing errors couples can avoid

1. **Too many accounts.** It's easy for things to get out of control if accounts are spread over several banks, brokerages, and financial institutions.
2. **One person makes all the decisions and deals with financial advisors.** If something happens to one, the survivor needs to have a working knowledge of the investments and a sense of trust with the advisor.
3. **No shared goals.** Discuss your goals and how you plan to work toward them.
4. **Not putting aside enough money for retirement.**

Experts advise saving 10% of your take-home pay each month. Also, both should sign up for any matching funds employers offer for retirement — it's "free money."

5. **Too much money tied up in cash or one type of investment.** For long-term goals, many couples tie up too much money in cash or other low-risk/low-return investments. A good financial advisor can help you spread your money over several different types of investments with which you feel comfortable.
6. **Commingling inherited assets.** Once money is placed in a joint account, in many states it's considered marital property. That means if you split up, you lose 50%.

Source: Dana Dratch, www.Bankrate.com



The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your health-care providers, not to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.

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stress less

4 great rules of life

- 1. Show up.** Be in the room when decisions are made. Be home when your child or spouse needs you. Face your responsibilities. Say "I'd like to be involved in that" or "How can I help?"
- 2. Pay attention.** Listen. Look for different perspectives. Stay hungry for understanding and new information.
- 3. Speak the truth.** Say what is true from where you sit.
- 4. Let go.** Let it happen. Know what is in your control and what is not. Shrug off the result, looking only for what you can learn.

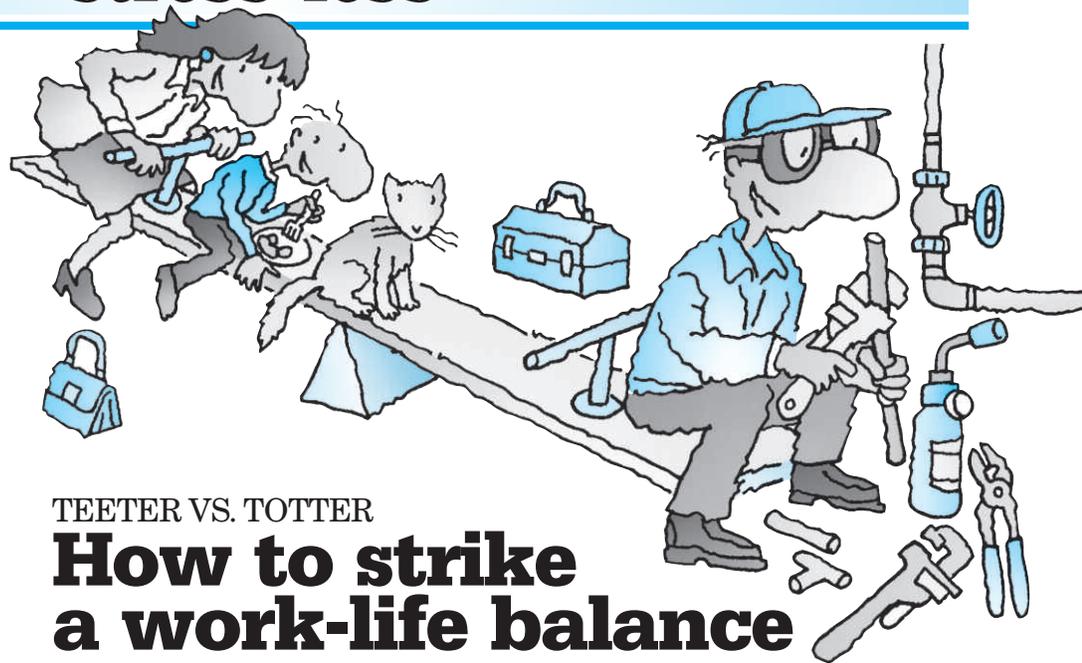
Source: Joe Flower Website at www.well.com/~bbear/change16.html



After she woke up, a woman told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a pearl necklace for Valentine's Day. What do you think it means?"

"You'll know tonight," he said. That evening, the man came home with a small package and gave it to his wife. Delighted, she opened it — to find a book titled *The Meaning of Dreams*.

Source: Unknown



TEETER VS. TOTTER

How to strike a work-life balance

- **Spend some time thinking about what's really important to you**, not what you think should be important. Make a list of the top five things. (Family, career, health, sports, community service, spirituality, hobbies, travel, etc.)
- **Learn how to manage your time.** It's quicker to answer e-mails at a set time instead of responding to them when they arrive. Do laundry a couple of nights a week instead of saving it all for one day. Run several errands at one time.
- **Turn off your Blackberry® or cell phone when you get home** — or at least establish certain times when you return calls, and make others aware of this time boundary.
- **Put important meetings and dates on a single calendar** and keep a "to do" list so you don't have to worry about things you might forget.
- **Find out whether or not your employer offers flex time** or the opportunity to work from home.
- **Ask for help when you need it**, whether it's getting your kids to help with chores or seeking counseling from a professional.
- **Plan time for fun and relaxation.** Block out a little private time each day. Set aside one night a week for recreation. Plan vacations in advance.

Sources: American Psychological Association; *Now What? 90 Days to a New Life Direction*, by Laura Berman Fortgang, Personal Coach

YOGA BREATHING

Quick and effective tension relief

As you inhale, raise your shoulders to your ears, pulling them up as high as they'll go. Exhale and let your shoulders drop back down. Move deliberately, paying attention to which muscles you're using. Repeat several times.

take care

EXERCISING YOUR BRAIN

Use your five senses to improve your memory



Both people with memory problems and those with no memory problems can benefit from stimulating their senses with exercises like these:

- **Put spices like cloves, cinnamon, or vanilla extract in a cup** covered with foil punched with holes, and guess what the smell is.
- **Hold an aroma under your nose** and see what memory or association comes to mind. Smell is the most powerful way to bring back memories.
- **Try a food that is new to you.** New tastes also stimulate the brain.
- **Put a bunch of different coins in a cup.** Without looking, pick up one at a time and try to guess which one you're holding. To stimulate your brain even more, use your left hand if you're right-handed, and vice versa.
- **Draw or paint something, just for fun.** Art activates the nonverbal and emotional parts of our brain.
- **Combine two senses:** Listen to music and smell flowers or some other pleasant scent. Listen to the rain and tap your fingers.

Source: *The Alzheimer's Association*

TAKE A STAND

Good posture can prevent backaches

Maintaining your back's three natural curves is key to good back care.

To check your posture, stand with your back against a wall. There should be only a small space behind your lower back while your upper back is flush to the wall. Slouching or standing in a rigid "military position" can throw off your back's natural curves. Tuck your buttocks in if your back is a bit swayed.

Source: *North American Spine Society*



February Health Observances

Our kids

Eating Disorders

A good way to start a conversation with a loved one who you think might have an eating disorder is to say something like "I'm concerned when I see you skip meals and worry about your weight so much." Stay calm, caring, and non-judgmental. For resources on how to spot and deal with eating disorders, visit www.nationaleatingdisorders.org.

Anorexia nervosa (eating too little) is the third most common chronic illness among teenage girls and can also affect young men.

Burn Awareness

For minor burns, apply cool — not cold — water for a few minutes. Using ice can make the burn worse. Avoid creams, ointments, or salves. Use an antimicrobial soap to clean the burn, and cover it with a clean, dry cloth.

See a doctor immediately for burns that are:

- On the face, hands, feet, genital area, or a major joint
 - Bigger than a person's palm
 - White, leathery, grey, or painless
 - Caused by electricity or fire
- Log onto www.ameriburn.org or www.burnawarenessweek.org to learn more.

Smart Living

Combine exercise with another activity:
Lift weights or do sit-ups while watching television.

HOPE HEALTH LETTER

Save on the Cost of Prescriptions

Did you know that you can order up to a 90-day supply of a covered, long-term medication at a retail pharmacy that participates in the maintenance network, or through Medco by Mail, and you will pay only two times your 30-day retail co-payment?

With a 90-day supply, you will not have to order medications as often — and, if you use Medco By Mail, your orders will be delivered to you. Standard shipping is free.

Here are some examples of how you may save money by having your prescription filled for a 90-day supply:

- **Generic** medication filled as three 30-day fills costs \$25.50 OR one 90-day fill costs \$17.00 with **savings of \$8.50**
- **Formulary** medication filled as three 30-day fills costs \$60.00 OR one 90-day fill costs \$40.00 with **savings of \$20.00**
- **Non-formulary** medication filled as three 30-day fills costs \$135.00 OR one 90-day fill costs \$90.00 with **savings of \$45.00**

DIRECTIONS FOR FIRST-TIME USERS

- The first time that you are prescribed a long-term medication you must try it initially in a 30-day



supply to be sure it is right for you. (Long-term medications are those taken for more than 3 months.)

- Ask your doctor for a 30-day prescription and a 90-day prescription. *Note: Some medications, such as certain controlled substances or medications that are prepackaged by the manufacturer, are not available in a 90-day supply and any current quantity or plan limits remain in effect.*

DIRECTIONS FOR THOSE CURRENTLY TAKING LONG-TERM MEDICATIONS

- Ask your doctor for a prescription for up to a 90-day supply of each covered, long-term drug you use, with refills for up to 1 year (if appropriate).

HAVE EACH PRESCRIPTION FILLED ONE OF THESE EASY WAYS

- Mail the prescription, a completed Medco By Mail order form

(available at www.ben.omb.delaware.gov/script/documents/medco/Medco_by_Mail_Ord_Form.pdf) and payment to Medco By Mail.

- Ask your doctor to fax the prescription to Medco by calling 1-888-327-9791 for instructions. (Only your doctor can fax prescriptions.)
- Bring your prescription to a retail pharmacy that participates in the 90-day provider network. (Visit www.ben.omb.delaware.gov/script for a list of pharmacies that fill 90-day prescriptions.)

For more information, call Medco's Member Services at 1-800-939-2142 or the Statewide Benefits Office at 302-739-8331 or 1-800-489-8933.

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