

February 2021



# Senior Health and Wellness Newsletter

Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living

## Heart Health Awareness

February is Heart Health Awareness Month. It is important to take care of your heart. Both your lifestyle and genetics play a role in your heart health. Though you cannot change genetics, you can make sure you follow a healthy lifestyle for heart health. If you have a family history of heart disease, it is very important to follow a heart healthy lifestyle. It is not too late to make changes to improve your heart health.

Coronary Artery Disease is where there is plaque built up on the artery walls that could lead to a heart attack. Hypertension is when blood pressure is not controlled and could cause a heart attack and/or stroke. Both of these conditions require medical monitoring, lifestyle changes, and possibly medications. Lifestyle changes would include a heart healthy diet (one in low saturated/trans fats and low sodium food products) and 150 minutes of physical activity a week (about 30 minutes a day for 5 days out of the week). You should consult with your doctor prior to starting any physical activity.

It is important to monitor and understand your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers. Total cholesterol is determined by adding your bad cholesterol, good cholesterol and 20% of your triglycerides. LDL is your bad cholesterol. HDL is your good cholesterol. Triglycerides is a type of fat in the body. Your doctor may check these labs

every year or more often if you have been diagnosed with heart disease or have risk factors. Cholesterol ranges are below in the chart. Keeping an eye on these lab values will help see trends you are having.

Physical activity should be something you enjoy doing. It could be walking, chair exercises, exercise program, and/or swimming. You do not have to spend a lot for memberships to get exercise in. Exercise can be done within your home. Exercise should be a combination between cardio and strength training.

Cholesterol Type	Healthy Range	High or At-Risk
Total Cholesterol	Less than 200	240 is considered high
HDL	Ideal is higher than 60	Men lower than 40 and women lower than 50 is considered at risk
LDL	Less than 100	130 or high is considered at risk
Triglycerides	<150	151+ considered elevated

The most common diet recommended for a heart healthy lifestyle is the DASH Diet. The DASH Diet stands for a Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension. The DASH Diet consists of:

- Eating more fruits and vegetables
- Choosing lower sodium food items
- Eating whole grains
- Choosing lean proteins
- Avoiding foods that are high in cholesterol, saturated and trans fats
- Limiting red meats
- Limiting sugary/salty drinks

When thinking about a lifestyle change that includes your diet, it is important to remember that changes do not have to be done overnight. It is encouraged to choose just a couple of things to work on that you feel are achievable. For example: switch from 2% or whole milk to 1% milk or choosing whole wheat bread rather than white bread. These examples are small changes but in long term, will make a difference.

Other ways to include more healthy options in your diet are: adding a fruit or vegetable to your lunch. Try cutting high fat foods (butter, margarine and mayonnaise) in half of your normal portion. Try consuming fresh or frozen options than salt/sugar added canned items. Reading food labels can help make healthy decisions. If you have additional questions to make a heart-healthy lifestyle change, consult with your primary care physician or a local registered dietitian nutritionist.



#### References:

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