

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Think About Your Heart, Wear Red Tomorrow!

Tomorrow, Feb 1, is National Wear Red Day. It's a way to announce to others that you care about your heart health and to remind your sisters, mothers, daughters, friends and neighbors all that they should be caring about their heart health as well. So if you have a red dress, wear it! Red shirt, red shoes, even a red scarf - wear it! Men, wear a red tie or sweater, they're your family too!

The national facts are that one out of every four American women dies of heart disease! The number one killer is not breast cancer, it's heart disease. Yet how many of us know what our cholesterol numbers are? Our blood lipids or triglycerides? Our blood pressure? How many of us know what our other risk factors are? Can you name the kinds of cholesterol? Which is good, or bad? Here's the nitty-gritty for women's heart health.

Most of the time all we hear about is keeping our cholesterol low. LDL the 'bad' cholesterol should be low, as low as possible. Under 100 is ideal. But while LDL levels are the best risk indicators for men, that's not true for women. Women's risk, especially as we get older, is better measured by our good cholesterol and our triglycerides.

Women should be more concerned about keeping their 'good' HDL cholesterol levels high than keeping our LDL low. National estimates are that 28 million American women have HDL cholesterol levels that are lower than they should be. In fact when the American Heart Association revised the recommendations for heart health in 2004, they decided the HDL levels were too low for women. Our best level now should be 50 or over! What's the best way to get your good cholesterol up? Exercise!

Exercise is the most reliable way to 1. bring your HDL cholesterol up. Of course

exercise also helps to 2. bring your blood pressure down, 3. bring your blood sugar down, 4. keep those bones strong and dense and 5. helps us manage our weight. Blood pressure and weight are also risk factors for heart health or disease, so if one thing can help in at least 5 different ways, let's do it! Get moving!

Any kind of exercise will help. Doing it regularly will be a bigger help. Doing several kinds of exercise will be a bigger help too. Start small if you're not exercising now. Don't sit to talk on the phone, walk around. Don't just sit to watch TV. Every time the commercials come on raise and lower cans of peaches or half-gallon jugs of water.

Triglyceride levels are the other risk factor that is more important in women than in men. Triglycerides are the way our bodies move fat around. Blood is mostly water. Since fat and water don't mix the fat has to be in special form to get to our cells. Fat being moved from place to place in our bodies is measured as triglycerides. Women with high triglyceride levels have a higher risk for heart disease.

A healthy triglyceride number is under 150. Over 500 is extremely high risk. Some medications will lower triglyceride levels, and these may be the only way if our level is extremely high. But exercise, stopping smoking, reducing alcohol intake and cutting back on the starches in our diets can all help lower triglyceride levels before they get to that extreme. That's reason #6 to exercise!

We don't have to stop eating starch and sugar all together. But keeping the amount down to only about half your calories will help a lot. Switch from regular to diet soda if you haven't done so all ready. Make sure that half of the grains and cereals you eat are whole grains. Oatmeal and barley are whole grains that will also help bring your bad cholesterol down.

Here's a heart-healthy version of creamy beef stroganoff to warm you up on a cool winter day. Enjoy it for dinner with a big green salad. Then put on a red sweater and go for a walk!

Beef Stroganoff

1 lb lean beef (top round)

2 tsp vegetable oil

1 Tbsp minced onion

1 lb sliced mushrooms

1/4 tsp salt

Pepper to taste

1/4 tsp nutmeg

1/2 tsp dried basil leaves

1/4 C white wine

1 C plain fat-free yogurt

6 C cooked whole wheat macaroni (cook in unsalted water according to package)

Trim all visible fat from beef, then cut in 1 inch cubes. Heat 1 tsp oil in non-stick skillet.

Saute onion for 2 minutes. Add beef and saute for 5 more minutes. Turn and stir so it

browns on all sides. Remove beef and onions from pan and keep warm. Add 1 tsp oil

and mushrooms to pan. Saute until limp. Add beef, onions and seasonings and reheat.

Stir in wine and yogurt until smooth but do not let boil. Serve over hot macaroni.

Serves 5.

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