

PENNY SAVER NEWS HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

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Have a Heart-Healthy Month

Don't just send a Valentine's Day card - although you really ought to do that too, if you want to keep peace in the family! But do something positive, something real, something *serious* about taking care of your heart and your family members' hearts this month. Even if no one in your family or household currently suffers from high blood pressure or other coronary heart disease problems, the truth of the matter is that close to 90% of Americans will have one or more problems by the time they reach age 70! That's a lot of people having a lot of problems!

The good news is that by starting early we can delay the problems, or have less serious problems. The earlier we start getting daily exercise, the better off we will be. Don't assume that your children are playing and running enough in school. Go take a walk with them, every day. Look for birds and learn to identify a few of them. Dance or ride a bike with the little ones. Play basketball or football with the older ones. Learn to ride a skateboard with them! You don't have to do the fancy flips, just get moving and encourage them to move too.

Keep your blood pressure down. Only about half of younger adults are sensitive to salt. For those who aren't, eating less salt won't lower blood pressure. Keeping the sodium (salt) balanced with the calcium, potassium and magnesium in the diet is most important. Increasing their intakes of these other minerals can be as effective as decreasing the sodium when they need to lower blood pressure.

What are the best sources of those minerals? Dairy products! Milk, cheese and yogurt are all great sources, but be sure to get low fat or fat-free products. So keep the dairy products on your family table and on the menu. It doesn't matter if they are

lactose-reduced or not, they will still have the beneficial minerals.

For young adults the maximum recommended amount of sodium in a day is 2300 mg. That's about one teaspoon of salt for the whole day, in all foods. There are some fast food sandwiches that have more than that in one sandwich! However, as we age we all become more sensitive to the effects of salt. Eventually we'll all get to the point where, in addition to keeping the calcium and others up, we also have to keep the sodium down. Being young is no excuse for living on high-salt fast foods!

For older adults and for anyone who has or is getting close to high blood pressure, the recommended amount per day is only 1500 mg, or 2/3 of a teaspoon. If you consider that just one tablespoon of soy sauce has 1024 mg of sodium, you can see it will take a lot of work to keep the sodium that low! The earlier we train ourselves to limit the salt, the easier it will be. And the earlier we learn to live with less salt, the longer it will be before the blood pressure rises.

Keeping the amount of fat, especially saturated fat, in our diets low is the other big thing we can do to keep the ticker ticking longer. We don't have to try to decipher the fine print in the ingredient list to see if our food has partially hydrogenated fats. Besides, not all hydrogenated fat has trans fats. Instead, just look at the Nutrient Facts box. If there are trans fats or saturated fats, the box will say how much. The lower both of these are, the better off your heart will be.

Pick one of these areas, or pick all of them. But take a serious look at your diet and your health. Then decide which changes you want to make to keep the 'ticker' ticking along. You'll stick around for a few more years to see the kids, or grandkids, grow up, and have the energy to play tag with them too!

Here's a reduced fat and sodium recipe for a good, old-fashioned meal to keep us warm these chilly days. Be sure to use the low fat ingredients to keep it healthy. If made according to directions it only has 120 mg of sodium and 4 g of fat. Have a Happy Valentine's Day!

New-Classic Mac and Cheese

2 C dry macaroni

½ C chopped onions

½ C evaporated skim milk

1 medium egg, beaten

1/4 tsp black pepper

4 oz. low fat sharp cheddar cheese

Non-stick pan spray

Cook macaroni in water (don't add salt) according to package directions. Drain. Spray baking dish with pan spray. Preheat oven to 350° F. Shred cheese finely. Spray a saucepan with nonstick cooking spray. Fry onions about 3 minutes. Add cooked macaroni, then other ingredients and mix completely. Transfer to baking dish. Bake 25 minutes until bubbly. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. Serves 8.

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