

Take it to Heart!

Your heart muscle is a little pump with a big job. This Valentine's Day, give yourself a stronger and healthier heart. Your loved ones will thank you! Take these steps to help prevent heart disease.

Be physically active. Try for 30 minutes a day of moderate exercise, 5 days a week. You don't have a 30-minute block for exercise? Break the 30 minutes of activity into two or three shorter "exercise snacks". And be more active all day: stand instead of sitting as much as you can, and walk up and down stairs more often.

Eat heart healthy. Eat vegetables every day. Cook with olive or canola oils. Snack on fruit or a handful of nuts. Eat more legumes/beans and fish for protein and less beef, pork and hamburger. Eat whole grain breads. Choose fat-free and low-fat dairy products. And avoid foods made with partially hydrogenated oils.

Limit sodium. Check the nutrition facts panel on food packages and compare sodium, especially in foods like soup, bread and frozen meals. Choose the foods with lower numbers. Aim for less than 2300 mg of sodium per day. Your daily sodium intake should be 1500 mg or less if you are age 51 or older, or at any age if you are African American or have high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic kidney disease.

Don't smoke and stay away from tobacco

smoke. Smoking cigarettes or cigars increases your risk of developing heart disease two to four times. When you quit, that risk starts to drop. If you smoke, make plans to quit and follow through.

Aim for a healthy weight. Weigh yourself and check your body mass index (BMI). It should be 25 or less. Need to lose? Enjoy your food but eat less. The healthy eating and exercise suggestions here are a good place to start. You'll find a BMI chart and information on how to get to and stay at a healthy weight, at www.stepaheadprogram.com

Start now! A lot of people don't think about heart health till they get a wake-up call, like a high blood pressure or high cholesterol reading. Experts say the best strategies for preventing heart disease begin early in life. This is especially important since heart disease is the leading cause of death for American women and men.

From: Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 and the American Heart Association. For more information, visit www.heart.org, www.goredforwomen.org and <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm>

Recipe of the Week: Died-and-Went-to-Heaven Chocolate Cake

Serves 16 – adapted from Eating Well magazine

1 cups all-purpose flour
¾ whole wheat flour
1 cup white sugar (or Splenda)
¾ cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
1 ½ tsp. baking soda
1 ½ tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1 ¼ cups fat-free or low-fat buttermilk
1 cup brown sugar
½ cup egg substitute
¼ cup canola oil
2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 cup hot strong black coffee (regular or decaffeinated)
Powdered sugar

- Preheat oven to 350°. Lightly oil a 12-cup bundt pan or spring form pan. Coat pan with cooking spray. Dust the pan

with flour or cocoa, invert and shake out excess.

- In a large mixing bowl, whisk together flour, white sugar (or Splenda), cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Add buttermilk, brown sugar, egg substitute, oil, and vanilla. Beat with an electric mixer on medium speed for 2 minutes.
- Whisk in hot coffee until completely incorporated (the batter will be quite thin).
- Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake 35 to 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
- Cool cake in pan on a rack for 10 minutes; remove from the pan and cool completely. Sprinkle with powdered sugar.

Nutritional Information (per slice):

Calories: 185	Carbohydrate: 35.2g
Total Fat: 4.3g	Dietary Fiber: 2.3g
Saturated Fat: 0.7g	Protein: 3.8g

Tip of the Week

Ideas for healthy Valentine's gifts: Gift certificate for a massage or yoga classes, dancing lessons, personalized mug and gourmet coffee beans, humorous book or CD or DVD, gift bag of heart-healthy foods, red wine, fresh strawberries, time spent together doing a favorite activity or a trying a new one.