

## Cue in to Heart Health Risks

Now is the time to take stock of how you're treating the most important organ in your body – your heart. Consider the following suggestions:

- *Your heart is a muscle.* The stronger it is, the better it will work for you. It needs to be exercised, which means regular activity like walking, running, or lifting weights.
- *Like any organ of your body, the heart won't serve you well if it's surrounded by fat.* Working toward a satisfactory body weight will help your heart do its job.
- *Your heart can't work as well if it gets plugged up.* Cholesterol can build up in your arteries and cause blockage. Have your cholesterol levels checked and take necessary actions to keep it in the healthy zone.
- *Hearts object to being excited all the time.* Anger, stress, and the burden of carrying a grudge make it work harder. Mend your fences, and channel your anger into productive action steps. Avoid overscheduling your time.
- *High blood pressure can be a heart breaker.* Keep blood pressure at normal levels. If your doctor has prescribed medication for your hypertension, take it every day.



## See the Road Clearly at Night

Ophthalmologists at the University of Iowa offers this advice for better night driving vision:

- Clean the windshield. Dirt scatters light, making it more difficult to see.
- Don't look into oncoming headlights. Instead, look to the white line that marks the right edge of the road.
- Blink often to keep your eyes moist. The drier your eyes are, the more light is scattered, and the harder it is to see.
- Get regular eye exams and wear proper corrective glasses or lenses if needed.

## ABCs of Sun Protection

- A** is for *Away*. Stay inside between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- B** is for *Block*. Use sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or more. Apply it 20 minutes before going out. Reapply often, especially if you're in and out of water. Be sure to apply sunscreen to lips and ears too.
- C** is for *Cover*. Cover up with a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt, and long pants. Stay in the shade whenever possible.
- S** is for *Speak Out*. Spread the word to your family and friends. Share the sunscreen with your companions.



## Pain, Pain, Go Away

Pain – no one wants to experience it, yet it provides an important service. In its simplest form, pain is a warning that something harmful has happened to your body and needs attention. But when pain becomes chronic, it can do more harm than good. It can make work difficult, rob you of sleep, and interfere with your ability to take care of yourself or enjoy everyday activities. Mood swings, fatigue and, over time, depression may set in. So, there's little value to toughing it out when it comes to chronic pain.

Fortunately, many people can manage chronic pain with over-the-counter (OTC) pain relievers. OTC pain relievers belong to one of two classes: *acetaminophen* – for example, Tylenol – and *nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs* (NSAIDs), such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen. These medications have brought effective pain relief to millions of users and – for occasional, short-term use – they're safe for most people.

Still, they carry a risk of certain side effects that all users must consider. NSAIDs could cause abdominal pain and swelling, upset stomach, vomiting, jitters, and sleepiness. NSAIDs also have the potential for more serious complications, such as gastrointestinal bleeding or ulcers; kidney, heart, or liver problems; and, though rare, heart attack or stroke. These risks increase greatly when taken in high doses, especially for 10 or more days.

Occasional short-term use of acetaminophen usually doesn't bring side effects. However, taking more than the safe and recommended dose can increase your risk of abdominal pain and swelling, upset stomach, nausea, vomiting, appetite changes, and liver damage.

### Safety First – Four Steps

To help reduce your risk of side effects from OTC pain relievers, follow these simple precautions:

- Take the medication exactly as directed and never exceed the maximum dose per day.
- Read the label carefully for warnings and information that might apply to you.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about other ways to minimize side effects.
- If you have medical conditions that could increase your risk of side effects, ask your healthcare provider to recommend a pain reliever.

*Not everyone can get relief from their pain with OTC medications. If the recommended safe dose of an OTC pain reliever doesn't effectively manage your pain, ask your healthcare provider about other pain management options. For personalized recommendations on pain relief choices that are relevant to you, visit the RealAge Pain Relief Center.*

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