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Total Wellness® BECOMING A TOTAL PERSON®

Volume XV, Number 2

February 2007

Protect Against a Broken Heart

When it comes to matters of the heart, the choices you make can mean the difference between life and death. **Ask yourself these questions to find out how you can take better care of your heart:**

- ◆ *Do you have high blood pressure?* Many people may be unaware that they have high blood pressure. Get checked by your doctor if you have a family history of high blood pressure.
- ◆ *Do you smoke?* Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your heart.
- ◆ *Do you monitor the amount of fat in your diet?* Total fat, saturated fat, and trans fat are all risk factors associated with heart disease. Read food labels and make wise food choices.
- ◆ *Do you exercise?* A sedentary lifestyle greatly increases your risk for heart disease. Make exercise a part of your daily life.
- ◆ *Do you need to lose weight?* Obesity promotes high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol, which are all contributors to heart disease.
- ◆ *Do you manage your diabetes?* Diabetes increases the risk of heart disease three to seven times. Work with your doctor to control it.

Reduce Your Risk for Heart Disease

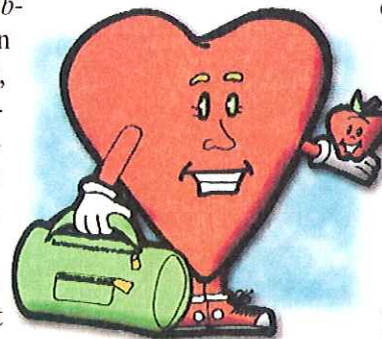
Several risk factors for heart disease, such as your age, gender, family and personal history, and ethnic background, can't be changed. However, the good news is that many risk factors can be controlled by making wise choices.

Here are several tips on how you can help control many of the risk factors for heart disease:

- *Improve your eating habits.* Choose foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, total fat, and cholesterol. Eat fruits, vegetables, whole-grain cereals, dried beans and peas, fish, skinless poultry, and lean meats. Cut down on salt and sugar too. Broil or steam foods instead of frying them. Also, try eating several small meals during the day instead of one big meal.
- *Have regular checkups to monitor your health.* Follow your doctor's advice and encourage all family members to see their doctor regularly. Know the name and purpose of each medicine you take. Prepare a schedule with the amounts and times to take each medicine.
- *Deal with stress.* Get plenty of sleep every night. Eliminate activities that make your schedule too hectic, and avoid stressful situations when possible.

Take 15 to 20 minutes each day to sit quietly and do nothing. Breathe in and out deeply and think about a peaceful setting. Accept the things that you can't change and realize that you don't have to solve all of life's problems on your own.

- *Stop smoking.* Make the choice to quit smoking and stick with it. Talk to your doctor about ways to stop smoking and find a support group to offer you encouragement as you make the change. Reward yourself in positive ways when you quit.
- *Get fit.* Develop an exercise plan that you can live with. Choose activities that you enjoy. Doing 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week can lower your risk of heart disease and make you feel better too. Find an exercise buddy and encourage one another to stick with it.
- *Take heart.* Anxiety and depression can be a problem for people with heart disease or those who have had a heart attack. Share your thoughts and feelings with a doctor, family member, or friend. Find ways to relieve worry and tension. Stay positive and hopeful about life.



For more information, visit the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org.