

REDUCING YOUR RISK FOR CARDIAC TROUBLES

By Dr. James Leggett, Sound Heart Overlake Cardiologist and Associate Director of Hope Heart Clinical Cardiac Research Program

Every year in the United States, more than 5 million men and women are given the diagnosis of coronary artery disease (hardening of the heart arteries). The good news is that specific steps can reduce our risk of developing heart disease.

Quitting smoking, eating a proper diet and exercising regularly are very important. Find an activity that you enjoy, because it means you are more likely to stick with it. For some, organized classes are an ideal option, while setting specific fitness or weight goals and celebrating when they are reached are options for others.

Eating well is crucial. Making simple changes helps your cardiovascular system, and can even boost your energy level. The Food Guide Pyramid gives recommendations for eating a balanced diet from a variety of food portions. The USDA recently expanded the four food groups to five, and increased the number of servings to meet the caloric needs of most people. They include:

- 3 to 5 servings of vegetables
- 2 to 4 servings of fruits
- 2 to 3 servings of milk, yogurt and cheese
- 6 to 11 servings of bread, cereal, rice and pasta
- 2 to 3 servings of meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs and nuts

The USDA also recommends using monounsaturated olive oil or unsaturated canola oil and avoiding trans-fatty acids and saturated fats.

There are simple lifestyle changes that can improve your eating habits without much effort. Combined with a regular exercise program, this can have a positive impact on preventing weight gain.

Make it a policy to not eat in your car, or while watching TV or reading. Distractions can prevent you from realizing you are full, and overeating is a real possibility. It can take a full 20 minutes for your brain to get the message that your stomach is full. If you eat more slowly and consciously, you will likely eat less.

HELPFUL WEB SITES

Overlake Hospital

www.overlakehospital.org

Offers a full range of advanced medical services to the Puget Sound region.

Sound Heart

www.soundheart.org

A joint enterprise between Overlake and Evergreen hospitals to offer everything from open-heart surgery to rehabilitation for patients, their families and the greater Eastside region.

Food and Nutrition Information Center

www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/fpyr/pyramid.html

The federal government offers food and nutrition information for Americans.

Skipping meals is a bad idea. You are better off eating a balanced and complete breakfast, lunch and a lighter dinner. This will reduce your impulse to snack and prevent overeating when you finally have a chance to eat a meal. Try keeping a food journal for a week and track the times and situations that seem to be linked to poor food choices. Awareness of a pattern may be all it takes to affect change.

It's important to note that a healthy lifestyle alone does not always guarantee a healthy heart. High blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes are often inherited. To best reduce the risk of developing heart disease, see your primary-care physician for a complete cardiac risk assessment. Begin this process in your early 30s, and check periodically thereafter.

Risk assessment should include at least a family history (family members with a history of heart disease before age 65) and evaluation of blood pressure, lipids (blood fats, including cholesterol) and blood sugar. If you have a family history of heart disease or an intermediate risk based

on the factors already mentioned, additional testing may be needed.

Recent large clinical trials have given overwhelming evidence that detection and appropriate management of blood pressure and cholesterol reduces the incidence of heart disease. Since this problem begins in young adulthood, make it a priority to identify any issues early so treatment can begin.

No one questions that exercise and eating right helps your heart. But remember to see your doctor regularly and specifically discuss your risk for heart disease.

OAT BRAN AND YOGURT MUFFINS

These low-salt, low-fat muffins boast more nutrition than a high-calorie snack bar. Enjoy them after your next workout.

- Vegetable oil spray
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole-wheat flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oat bran
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup lowfat yogurt
- 1 large egg or egg substitute equivalent
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 425°F. Spray a 12-cup muffin tin with vegetable oil spray. In a large bowl, stir together flours, oat bran, raisins, sugar, baking powder and baking soda. In a small bowl, whisk together remaining ingredients. Pour into flour mixture and stir just until moistened. Do not overmix. Batter should be lumpy. Pour about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup batter into each muffin cup. Bake for 16 to 18 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center of a muffin comes out clean.

—Recipe from Sound Heart