February is American Heart Month

The Heart Truth®, a national awareness campaign, urges women to talk with their doctor to find out if they have risk factors for heart disease. Risk factors, such as high blood cholesterol, are conditions or habits that make a person more likely to develop a disease. When there is too much cholesterol—a fat-like substance—in your blood, it builds up in the walls of your arteries and increases your risk of developing heart disease.

Nearly 1 in every 2 American women has high or borderline high cholesterol. The condition usually has no signs or symptoms, so many people don’t know that their cholesterol levels are too high.

Why Is Cholesterol Important?
High blood cholesterol is one of the major risk factors for heart disease. In fact, the higher your blood cholesterol, the greater your risk of developing heart disease or having a heart attack. Heart disease is the #1 killer of men.
and women in the United States. Each year, more than a million Americans have a heart attack, and about half a million people die of heart disease.

How Does Cholesterol Cause Heart Disease?
When cholesterol builds up in the walls of your arteries, this buildup causes “hardening of the arteries” so that arteries become narrowed and blood flow to the heart becomes slowed down or blocked. This may cause chest pain or even a heart attack.

High blood cholesterol itself does not cause symptoms, so many people are unaware when their cholesterol is too high. It is important to find out your cholesterol numbers. Lowering levels that are too high lessens the risk of developing heart disease or dying from it if you already have it.

What Affects Cholesterol Levels?
A variety of things can affect cholesterol levels. These are things you can do something about:

- **Diet**—Saturated fat and cholesterol in food may increase your cholesterol level.
- **Weight**—Being overweight tends to increase your cholesterol level.
- **Physical activity**—Being inactive is a risk factor for heart disease. Regular physical activity can help lower LDL cholesterol and raise HDL cholesterol.

Things you cannot do anything about also can affect your cholesterol levels. These include:

- **Age**—As people get older, their cholesterol levels rise.
- **Gender**—Women tend to have higher LDL levels.
- **Heredity**—High cholesterol can run in families.

Treating High Cholesterol
The main goal of cholesterol-lowering treatment is to lower your LDL level enough to reduce your risk of developing heart disease or having a heart attack. Four risk categories (numbered I–IV) will affect the type of treatment that is right for you. Talk with your doctor to learn your risk category and recommended treatment.

There are two main ways to lower your cholesterol:

- **Therapeutic lifestyle changes (TLC)**—This program includes a cholesterol lowering diet (called the TLC diet), physical activity and weight management. TLC is for anyone whose LDL is above goal.
- **Drug therapy**—If cholesterol-lowering drugs are needed, they are used together with TLC treatment to help lower LDL.

To reduce your risk for heart disease or keep it low, it is very important to control any other risk factors you may have, such as high blood pressure and smoking.


---

**Get Going**

**Ab Circuit**

The abdominal muscles provide bracing and stability to the core. Strengthening this group of muscles can help your posture.

**Part 1 – Long arm full body crunch**
1. Lie on your back on your mat; extend your arms straight above head, near ears, and crossed at the hands.
2. Bring your knees into the chest while lifting your shoulder blades a few inches off the floor; do not swing your arms forward. Hold for two or three seconds.
3. Perform for 30-60 seconds

**Part 2 – Bicycle crunch**
1. Lie on your back on your mat and place your hands behind your head, lightly supporting it with your fingers.
2. Bring your knees into the chest, press your lower back in the mat and lift the shoulder blades off the floor without pulling on the neck.
3. Rotate to the left by bringing the right elbow towards the left knee as you straighten the right leg.
4. Switch sides by bringing the left elbow towards the right knee while straightening your left leg—as if you are pedaling a bicycle.
5. Perform for 1 minute

**Part 3 – Plank**
1. Lie face down on your mat; resting on the forearms, palms flat on the floor.
2. Push off the floor, raising up onto toes and resting on the elbows.
3. Keep your back flat, in a straight line from head to heels. Keep your chin tucked to keep the spine aligned.
4. Tilt your pelvis and contract your abdominals to prevent your rear end from sticking up in the air or sagging in the middle.
5. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds.

**Make sure you:**
- Complete these exercises in a circuit.
- Conduct 3-4 rounds.
- Rest for 30 seconds in between each circuit.

*Instructions provided by Haley Forsgren, Master Trainer, Dallas, TX.*
Are You Sticking to Your Resolutions?
Experts Offer Four Ways to Avoid Setbacks — and Lower Your Cancer Risk

Just a few weeks into the new year is the time when many Americans start to lose steam on their new, healthy goals. But sticking to those resolutions could help lower cancer risk, according to experts at the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), and that’s why the AICR is choosing this moment to offer four tips to stay on track.

According to USA.gov, drinking less alcohol, eating healthier and losing weight top the list of New Year’s resolutions Americans make every year. Those same goals happen to be important in lowering risk for several cancers. In fact, according to an AICR report, simply by eating smart, moving more and keeping off excess weight, Americans could prevent about a third of the most common cancers – that’s over 340,000 cases – every year.

“Whether you resolved to undergo a complete health overhaul or take a small step in the direction of a healthier lifestyle, you need support,” says AICR Registered Dietitian Alice Bender. “Achieving New Year resolutions may depend on whether you’re prepared for those inevitable obstacles along the way.”

Top Tips to Overcome the Obstacles

1. Takes Too Long
New habits require a time commitment and chances are you’ll not get less busy. Here’s the key: start with a change that you can work into your existing schedule. Be specific and begin gradually:
  • “I want to walk every day.” Set a specific time goal like 45 minutes. Start with 10 minutes daily – or add 10 minutes to your current time – then add a little more each week.

2. Becoming Bored
The problem here is the goal, not you. How to solve? Think practical and (as much as possible) enjoyable.
  • “I want to eat more vegetables.” Think healthy convenience: purchase pre-chopped vegetables, stir-fry meat strips and frozen brown rice. Stir-fry the meat; add plenty of veggies with a little broth. While that steams, microwave the rice. Season to taste – a tasty, veggie-filled meal. Bonus: ready in 15 minutes.

3. Vices and Vacations
Routine is key to starting and maintaining new habits, so interruptions to your usual schedule can be resolution-killers. Plan for these interruptions and have a strategy to ease back into your routine and your specific goal:
  • “I was on vacation for 10 days and haven’t been back to the gym.” Plan for some support like a scheduled training session at the gym or ask a friend to go with you.

4. Exaggerated Expectations
Sustainable weight loss is gradual and slower than we’d like, but you should lose a few pounds within 6-8 weeks. The most import actions for success? Setting appropriate and realistic goals and selecting strategies that you can follow:
  • “I will change my after-dinner snack from chips to a piece of fruit.” For weight loss goals, break it down to specific changes that you can make over weeks and months. You might substitute lower calorie foods at some meals and snacks or change habits that lead to overeating, such as eating in front of the TV.

Find more information and strategies in “Moving More for Cancer Prevention,” “Eating Smart for Cancer Prevention” and “Staying Lean for Cancer Prevention” at www.aicr.org.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research.
Conscientious Cuisine

Lemony Garbanzo Bean Dip

1 (15-ounce) can garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
1/2 cup low-fat sour cream
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon oil

1/2 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon hot sauce
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons or more cilantro, chopped

1. For a smooth dip, place ingredients in a food processor or blender and process until smooth OR for a chunky dip, mash beans well with a fork or potato masher and stir in remaining ingredients. Add additional liquid as needed for desired consistency.

2. Add salt and pepper to taste.

3. Serve with fresh vegetables or pita wedges.

4. Refrigerate leftovers within 2-3 hours.

Nutritional information per serving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates</td>
<td>3g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total fat</td>
<td>1.5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Saturated fat)</td>
<td>.5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber</td>
<td>1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>60mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Serving Size = 2 tablespoons