



Healthy Habits

Faculty and Staff Wellness Program

Calvin College

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Fact: Approximately 90% of heart attacks in women are preventable.¹

Fact: People who volunteer their time and resources live longer.¹

Fact: Individuals who sleep for less than seven hours per night have higher blood pressures than those who sleep ample amounts.¹

Fact: A serving size of meat, poultry, or fish is equal to the size of a deck of cards.⁵

Heart Health

Heart disease is a leading cause of death globally, and the principle cause of death in the United States.¹ Cardiovascular diseases cause over thirty percent of annual deaths worldwide,² despite the fact that more than half the cases of heart disease are preventable. Lifestyle, including diet, exercise, smoking, and alcohol consumption, plays a large role in triggering or preventing heart disease. However, to better understand the causes of heart disease, a basic understanding of heart health is needed.

A quick summary of basic

heart health concepts follows:

Cholesterol is a substance found in the bloodstream which helps the body perform many important functions. Some cholesterol is produced by your body, while some is ingested in animal products you eat. There is good and bad cholesterol: **HDL** (the “good”) helps carry extra cholesterol away from the arteries to the liver, where it is flushed from the body; **LDL** (the “bad”) can build up in arteries and increase your risk of heart attack or stroke.³ A blood test can discover your relative levels of good and bad

cholesterol.

Blood pressure is the stress on the arteries when the heart is beating (systolic) and at rest (diastolic). The two numbers in a blood pressure reading indicate the systolic and diastolic pressures respectively. High blood pressure is known as **hypertension** and greatly increases the risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. High blood pressure is most common in people over the age of 35, although other demographics, such as diet and amount of exercise may increase the probability as well.⁴ A simple test can determine your blood pressure.

Caring for Your Heart

Because so many risk factors for heart disease are determined by lifestyle, your likelihood of developing cardiovascular diseases can be greatly decreased by conscientious adherence to the following tips:

Limit unhealthy fats and cholesterol.

Saturated and trans fats, also listed as “partially hydrogenated,” should be replaced with monounsatu-

rated or polyunsaturated fats whenever possible. Watch your consumption of cholesterol, salt, and high-fat protein sources, and maintain a healthy, balanced diet. Nuts are especially good sources of omega-3 fatty acids, which decrease artery inflammation. Likewise, dietary fiber found in whole grains, fruits, and vegetables may lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart diseases.

Strengthen your heart.

Cardiovascular training reduces your body fat percentage and increases your aerobic endurance, which in turn increases your body’s ability to create and use “good” cholesterol. Besides the physical benefits of regular exercise, the psychological and emotional benefits of lowered stress and increased well-being will reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Three-Grain Raspberry Muffins

Yield: 12 muffins
Per Serving: Calories: 162
Protein: 3g
Carbohydrates: 27g
Total Fat: 5g
Saturated: 1g
Cholesterol: 19mg
Sodium: 156mg
Fiber: 2g

1/2 cup rolled oats
1 cup 1 percent low-fat milk or plain soy milk
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup cornmeal, preferably stone-ground
1/4 cup wheat bran
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup dark honey
3 1/2 tablespoons canola oil
2 teaspoons grated lime zest
1 egg, lightly beaten
2/3 cup raspberries

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners.

In a large microwave-safe bowl, combine the oats and milk. Microwave on high until the oats are creamy and tender, about 3 minutes. Set aside.

In a large bowl, combine the flour, cornmeal, bran, baking powder and salt. Whisk to blend. Add the honey, canola oil, lime zest, oats mixture and egg. Beat just until moistened but still slightly lumpy. Gently fold in the raspberries.

Spoon the batter into the muffin cups, filling each cup about 2/3 full. Bake until the tops are golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean, 16 to 18 minutes. Transfer the muffins to a wire rack and let cool completely.⁶



Health Habits Highlight of the Month



For Laura Van Wyk, a department assistant in the CIT department at Calvin College, weight loss had always been a struggle, and going to Weight Watchers meetings was just another obligation. That is, until recently. In February 2008, Laura decided to heed her doctor's warning and kick it into gear to get her weight under control. Laura had been a member of Weight Watchers for years but this time was different. This time Laura had a support group of Calvin co-workers and she added exercise to her new and improved diet.

Laura knew the Weight Watchers routine. She knew the point system, but something still had to change. Laura simply changed portion size at meals. Instead of eating until she was full, Laura would eat a recommended serving and then add vegetables to her meal until her stomach was satisfied. Another simple change was to keep veggies at work for any-time snacking.

Laura also added exercise to her routine. She joined a walking group with friends and walks around campus during her lunch break three times a week. The other two week-days Laura is a regular in the Fitness Center. Laura says it is this support group that keeps her going. She has even recruited the help of her family.

In November of this past year, Laura had reached her goal weight. At this time Laura has lost four dress sizes and is much healthier! She has no more joint pain, is off her previous prescription medicines and has normal blood fat levels. Not only that, but Laura has noticed that her family has lost weight and gained muscle tone right along with her!

Congratulations, Laura! You are an inspiration to others!

Diet your way to a Healthy Heart

- 1. Be a nut about heart health!** Walnuts are high in omega-3 fatty acids helping to decrease inflammation in arteries. Pistachios can help reduce LDL, "bad" cholesterol. Be careful however as nuts are generally high in calories.¹
- 2. Select low-fat protein sources.** Lean meats will keep you lean; eat poultry and fish. Pay special attention to cod, halibut, or tuna as these fish have less total fat. Also look for salmon, mackerel, and herring for more omega-3 fatty acids. Try to consume low-fat dairy products and egg whites.
- 3. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.** These foods will be excellent sources of vitamins and minerals and are low in calories. Fruits and vegetables will also provide fiber, which can lower cholesterol and reduces risk for heart disease.
- 4. Choose whole grains.** The fiber and other nutrients in whole grain products can help to regulate blood pressure. A great diet choice is flaxseed as it has high fiber content and is rich in omega-3 fatty acids.
- 5. Reduce salt!** Limit yourself to less than a teaspoon, 2300 milligrams, of added salt per day.²
- 6. Remember moderation.** Watch portion sizes and follow the recommended serving size. Have balance between different food groups and don't feel bad about indulging in a little treat every once in a while.⁵

1. <http://webmd.com/heart/features/12-tips-for-better-heart-health>
2. <http://www.america.gov/st/heart-english/2008/July/20080724175631abretnun0.9819757.html>
3. <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3045798>
4. <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=2112>
5. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/heart-healthy-diet/NU00196>
6. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-recipes/NU00350>