

Daily Union Article
Saturday, February 17, 2018
Title: Take Heart in Purchasing Healthy Foods

February is American Heart Month. The goal of this initiative is to raise awareness about the health of our hearts and how the choices we make can impact our heart health.

Because over 2,300 people die from cardiovascular disease in America each day, it is likely that most of you who read this article have a personal story to share about themselves or someone they care about who have been impacted by heart disease.

People around the world are dealing with this critical health issue, as well. The American Heart Association reports that "Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease and stroke, remains the leading global cause of death with more than 17.9 million deaths each year."

If you have heart disease in your family, or if your doctor has told you that you are at risk of cardiovascular disease the sooner you make some simple lifestyle changes the sooner you can reduce your risk for this disease. There are a wide variety of steps you can take, but I suggest you begin with a full physical and a conversation with your doctor about what your body and physical condition can work with. From there, choose to start aggressively with only one or two changes rather than trying to make a wide-sweeping lifestyle change that simply overwhelms you.

My dad started smoking when he was 9. I still marvel at my dad quitting "cold turkey" on the day he was admitted to the hospital due to a massive heart attack in August of 1978. He was only in his late 40's and still had all 4 children living at home. I believe that his family was his primary motivation. Two years later, he had open heart surgery that bought him only 6 more years of life. I believe if he had not stopped smoking in 1978, he would not have had the additional 8 years of life.

Smoking was not the only challenge my dad had that contributed to his heart disease. He also did not always make good food choices. He was such an amazing and natural cook, but his food preparation techniques included a lot of frying, breading, saucing, and salting.

Eating heart healthy meals consistently is a lifestyle change for most people. Some will say that they don't want to give up the flavor or the less-healthy alternatives they choose to consume. Others will say that it costs too much to eat healthier options.

The truth is both statements *can* be true but only if you let them be true. By taking time to think through your menu and plan meals with health heart in mind, you can prepare tasty and economical dishes that will please your palate and satisfy your hunger.

Focus on decreasing fat and sodium intake and increasing fiber intake. Making a change in how you cook and how you season can go a long way toward making your menus heart friendly. Avoid frying your meat and poultry. Instead, consider grilling, baking, or even using a steamer. Use low-sodium seasoning mixes or change up the flavor by omitting the salt and adding alternative spices such as sage, rosemary, or garlic.

Your menus don't need to be complicated. There are many foods in your current preferences that can be modified to reduce fat and sodium while enjoying the flavor of the food itself.

Here is an example 1- day menu offered by the Iowa State Extension and Outreach that would be a good start to changing your food choices so they are more heart healthy and economical, too!

Breakfast: whole wheat toast, peanut butter, orange, skim milk

Snack: cottage cheese, canned pineapple in juice

Lunch: pork loin and vegetables, whole grain roll

Snack: popcorn

Supper: Mexican chicken soup, low-sodium crackers, apple and skim milk

<https://iastate.app.box.com/s/6a073s9g34gfia0thev88mu1bp4rzfw2>; extracted 2/15/2018.

If you follow the link above, you will find an entire month of menus that are nutritionally sound and economical to prepare. Within the 4-week list of menus, there are recipes for many of the main courses listed. Just click on the underlined menu item, and it will take you to the recipe, give you an estimated cost per serving, and provide detailed nutrition label. Eating healthy is made much easier with tools such as this!

What's next for a heart-healthy lifestyle? You probably already know this – physical activity. The American Heart Association AHA physical activity recommendation

The American Heart Association recommends just 40 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise three to four times a week. Even brisk walking will do.

Check out these ways that physical activity reduces your heart disease risk, according to the American Health Association:

- ✓ Prevents and manages high blood pressure
- ✓ Reduces coronary heart disease in women by 30-40 percent

- ✓ Reduces risk of stroke by 20 percent in moderately active people and by 27 percent in highly active ones
- ✓ Establishes good heart-healthy habits in children and counters the conditions (obesity, high blood pressure, poor cholesterol levels, poor lifestyle habits, etc.) that lead to heart attack and stroke later in life
- ✓ Physical activity can also boost your levels of **good cholesterol**.

No smoking, healthy food choices, and increased physical activity poses a triple threat for preventing heart disease! For more information about heart healthy food preparation, contact me at the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully.