Healthy choices prevent heart disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. The good news is that heart disease can often be prevented when people make healthy choices and manage their health conditions. Communities, health professionals and families can work together to create opportunities for people to make healthier choices.

Nearly 800,000 Americans die each year from heart disease and stroke. Most of the major risk factors can be managed or prevented.

**Risk factors and solutions for managing them**

- **Unhealthy diet** – Eat a healthy diet, low in sodium and trans fats and high in fresh fruits and vegetables.
- **High blood pressure** – Make control your goal.
- **Physical inactivity** – The Surgeon General recommends adults engage in moderate-intensity exercise for 2 hours and 30 minutes every week.
- **High cholesterol** – Work with your doctor on a treatment plan to manage your cholesterol.
- **Diabetes** – Work with your doctor on a treatment plan to manage your diabetes.
- **Tobacco use** – If you don’t smoke, don’t start. If you do smoke get help to quit.
- **Obesity** – Work to maintain a healthy weight.

Source: [www.healthfinder.gov](http://www.healthfinder.gov)
“It doesn’t matter if you’re young or old or overweight. Take that first step to improve your health.”

Gregorio Mata is an active participant of the free workout classes offered in Rio Hondo and encourages everyone to exercise regularly.

- “Instead of sitting to watch TV for hours, workout for at least 30 minutes at home or go for a walk around your neighborhood.”
- “Do not eat with your eyes, meaning that you eat everything in sight. Instead, watch your portions and what you put on your plate. Look at the amount of fruits & vegetables that you eat with each meal.”
- “My doctor was surprised about my health improvements and asked how I did it. I told him that it was all from daily exercise and cutting out fats and unhealthy drinks like sodas. Diet and exercise are both important.”
- “Remember, you’re not alone. There is a lot of free help in our communities to keep you on track with your weight-loss and healthy living goals.”

Take care of your heart & arteries!

- Be aware of the unhealthy, fattening foods you eat on a daily basis. Remember that sweet bread, cookies and even a slice of pizza have a high amount of fat.
- Canned or processed foods normally have a high amount of sodium. Try to eat fresh produce, instead. Also, remember that deli meats like ham have lots of added salt. Watch your portions.
- Know your ideal weight size for your age and height. Stay active and eat healthy to take care of your heart & blood circulation. Also, remember to monitor your blood pressure and understand your blood pressure readings.

Healthy Recipe: Zucchini & Chicken Boats

Scoop out the seeds from zucchinis and use them as "boats". Sprinkle with fresh cilantro & sliced green onion, if desired. Pair with a slice of low-sodium black or pinto beans.

**Ingredients:**
- cooking spray
- 4 medium zucchini squash, thoroughly washed
- 1/2 medium white or yellow onion, diced
- 2 minced garlic cloves
- 1/2 medium bell pepper, any color, diced
- 2 Tbsp. chopped, fresh cilantro
- 2 chicken breasts, cooked & shredded

**Directions:**
1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. Spray a 9x13 baking dish with cooking spray.
3. Slice zucchinis in half lengthwise. Scoop out seeds and flesh of zucchini, leaving walls of the zucchini about ¼ inch thick. Chop the zucchini scrapings and set aside in a small bowl.
5. Place the zucchini "boats" in the sprayed 9x13 baking dish, cut-side facing up. Spoon chicken mixture in to zucchinis, dividing equally among the eight "boats."
6. Bake in preheated oven for 40-45 minutes until zucchinis are cooked through.

Healthy Living Role Model

Alda de la Garza Nutritionist

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