

# AMERICAN HEART MONTH

Heart Disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States, yet 80% of all heart attacks can be prevented. A great way to reduce your risk is to *know your heart screening numbers*. The most important are blood pressure, blood sugar, LDL and HDL cholesterol and body mass index (BMI). These values, in addition to your family history and personal habits (tobacco use, exercise and stress management), help health professionals design strategies that can lead to a long lifetime of heart health.



**Blood Pressure** is the force with which your heart pumps blood through your blood vessels. Remembering that your heart is a pump and the vessels are hoses makes blood pressure easier to understand. Blood pressure measurements are recorded as two numbers. The higher number is the systolic pressure, and the lower number is the diastolic pressure. Systolic blood pressure is a measure of the amount of force (pressure) generated by the heart when it contracts. Diastolic pressure is a measure of the amount of force in between contractions.

## *What is a healthy blood pressure?*

A healthy blood pressure reading is anything below 120/80, which is read as “120 over 80”. Blood pressures higher than that should be checked again. High blood pressure (hypertension) is diagnosed when either the systolic or the diastolic pressure is high on repeated occasions.

## *What can I do to maintain or improve my blood pressure?*

- Take time for exercise most days of the week. Walking is one of the easiest forms of exercise, and it also happens to be one of the best ways to maintain a healthy blood pressure.
- Limit your sodium intake. The American Heart Association recommends generally healthy individuals eat no more than 2,300 mg of sodium a day. Eating as little as 1,500 mg every day is optimal for heart health.
- Manage your stress in healthy ways, get plenty of sleep and avoid tobacco and excessive alcohol use.

**Blood Sugar** is exactly what it sounds like—a measure of the sugar level in your blood stream. Diabetes is a condition where blood sugar levels are consistently too high. While high blood sugar levels are not a direct cause of heart disease, people with diabetes are 2-4 times more likely to have heart attacks or strokes.

## *What is a healthy blood sugar reading?*

A healthy fasting blood sugar reading is anything less than 100. Similar to blood pressure, high blood sugar readings warrant follow-up and close monitoring to ensure your levels are not consistently high. Catching high sugar values early (pre-diabetes) can help people change their habits to avoid diabetes altogether.

## *What can I do to maintain or improve my blood sugar?*

- Limit your intake of simple and added sugar. Limit refined grains, baked goods, soda pop and other processed foods. Choose foods high in fiber such as vegetables, fruits and whole grains.
- Include strength building exercises in your workout routine. Maintaining and building muscle mass helps burn sugar.

**Cholesterol** is a substance that our bodies use for a number of healthy functions. However, cholesterol is also one of the culprits behind heart disease when it accumulates in our blood vessels (arteries). When we are born, our arteries are wide open, but years of aging, fatty foods, lack of exercise and/or smoking can lead to cholesterol filled, blocked arteries. Rather than looking at your total cholesterol values, we encourage you to look at your LDL cholesterol and HDL cholesterol individually. LDL (low-density lipoprotein) is the “bad” cholesterol carrier because high values increase the risk that cholesterol filled plaque is building up in our arteries. This build-up eventually causes blockages and clots that can result in a heart attack or stroke. HDL (high-density lipoprotein) is the “good” cholesterol. It helps remove plaque from arteries and carries cholesterol back to the liver where it is recycled or eliminated.

#### *What are healthy cholesterol levels?*

A healthy total cholesterol is any result less than 200. Ideal LDL levels are those less than 100. Ideal HDL levels are greater than 60 for men and women.

#### *What can I do to maintain or improve my cholesterol?*

- Watch your dietary fat intake. Limit foods high in saturated fat like red meat, pork, butter and full fat dairy products. Replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats such as plant oils, nuts, seeds, avocado and fish.
- Maintain a healthy weight for your height, do no smoke and engage in regular aerobic activity (e.g., walking, biking, swimming, or running).

Heart Smart Numbers	Healthiest Values — Strive for These	High Risk Values — Talk to Your Doctor
Glucose (Blood Sugar)	Fasting below 100	Fasting above 110
Blood Pressure	Below 120 (systolic) and 80 (diastolic)	Above 140 (systolic) or 90 (diastolic)
LDL Cholesterol	Below 100	Above 130
HDL Cholesterol	Above 60	Below 40 for men and 50 for women
Triglycerides	Below 150	Above 200
Body Mass Index (BMI)	For most people below or near 25	For most people above 30

## Vegetarian Bean Chili

Recipe from “The Best Light Recipe” by the Editors of Cook’s Illustrated Magazine

#### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 1 medium onion, minced
- 1 large red bell pepper, chopped
- 9 medium garlic cloves, minced
- 3 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne
- 2 cups water
- 3 cups canned beans (black, pinto and kidney), drained and rinsed
- 1 can (28oz) crushed tomatoes (no salt added)
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon lime juice

#### Directions

1. Toast the cumin seeds in a large Dutch oven over medium low heat, stirring constantly, until fragrant, 1 minute.
2. Stir in the onion, bell pepper, garlic, chili powder, oil, cayenne, and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cover and cook, stirring often, until the vegetables are softened, about 8-10 minutes.
3. Stir in the water, beans, tomatoes, oregano, and brown sugar, scraping up any browned bits.
4. Bring to a boil over medium high heat; reduce the heat to medium low and simmer until the chili is slightly thickened, about 25 minutes.
5. Stir in the corn and continue to simmer until heated through, 5 -10 minutes.
6. Off the heat, stir in the cilantro and lime juice, and season with salt to taste. (The chili can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 3 days).

#### Nutrition Facts

Total Servings - 4

Per 1 Serving

Calories: 370 / Total Fat: 6g / Saturated Fat: 1g / Sodium: 83mg / Carbs: 63g / Fiber: 12g / Sugars: 17g / Protein: 13g

For more information, contact Be Well Solutions at (888) 935-7378 or [info@bewellsolutions.com](mailto:info@bewellsolutions.com).

## The Value of Prevention

When it comes to health and health care in America, you may be surprised to learn that rising health care costs are the leading driver of our national debt – primarily due to treating the chronic disease epidemic.

Among the most preventable conditions with the greatest impact on health care spending:

- >> **Obesity** is the No. 1 risk for multiple health problems.
- >> **Smoking** is the No. 1 cause of preventable disease.
- >> **Stress** is the No. 1 workplace health disability.

The leading chronic diseases are heart attack, stroke, cancer, diabetes, COPD, musculoskeletal disorders and mental illness. About 80% of these diseases can be prevented or delayed when we use available clinical care methods, foster health education and make individual health changes.



You can learn more about prevention efforts at [fightchronicdisease.org](http://fightchronicdisease.org).

As individuals, we can actively protect our health and reduce premature disabilities. For example:

- >> For tobacco users, quitting is the best thing you can do for your health.
- >> For obesity, weight loss can provide multiple benefits.
- >> For guidance, work with your health care provider.



## Antioxidants Revealed

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Every time you hear about a new superfood, you'll likely learn that it's high in **antioxidants**. This term is used to promote acai berries, pomegranate, green tea and other foods. Is it hope or hype? Let's take a closer look.

**Antioxidants 101:** Antioxidants are vitamins, minerals, flavonoids and other substances in plant and animal foods. They help protect cells from damage by free radicals, created via pollution, cigarette smoke, alcohol and more. When free radicals outnumber antioxidants in the body, it leads to a condition called *oxidative stress*, causing cell damage that can lead to cancer, heart disease and vision problems and contribute to aging.

**Antioxidant-rich foods may contain different types of antioxidants with different health benefits. The bottom line?** Enjoy a variety of vegetables, fruit, nuts, beans, fish, herbs, spices – even coffee and tea – to get a wide range of antioxidants.

**And it's better to get antioxidants from food than from supplements.** The combination of antioxidants, minerals, fiber and other substances found naturally in foods can help prevent chronic disease, but it's unlikely high doses of antioxidant supplements have the same effect.

## QuikQuiz™:

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

## The Lowdown on Added Sugar

How much do you know about sugar and your intake?

Test your knowledge:

1. Which foods contain added sugar (choose all that apply):

- ☐ a. Honey, maple syrup and molasses
- ☐ b. Candy, ice cream and soda
- ☐ c. Fruit and vegetables
- ☐ d. Plain milk and plain yogurt

2. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), you should have no more than \_\_\_\_ teaspoons of added sugar per day.

- ☐ a. 3 for women and 4 for men
- ☐ b. 6 for women and 9 for men
- ☐ c. 12 for women and 15 for men
- ☐ d. 20 for women and 25 for men

3. Added sugar is a required nutrient in the diet.

- ☐ True ☐ False

4. People who get greater than or equal to 10% but less than 25% of total calories from added sugar have a \_\_\_\_ higher risk of death from heart disease or stroke when compared to those who consume less than 10%.

- ☐ a. 5%
- ☐ b. 10%
- ☐ c. 20%
- ☐ d. 30%

Answers on back. >>







February is  
American Heart Month.

## Silent Heart Attacks



**Chest pain, shortness of breath and cold sweats are typical heart attack signs.** But many Americans have heart attacks without symptoms – and when they do, they are 3 times as likely to die from heart disease. Here's why:

**Symptoms of a silent heart attack can be so mild they're barely noticed.** They're often mistaken for indigestion, nausea, muscle pain or influenza. **Most silent heart attacks are discovered accidentally,** with the damage showing up on an EKG or MRI given during a regular exam or before surgery.

**When silent heart attacks go undiagnosed,** people don't get the treatment needed to prevent another heart attack. Although silent heart attacks are more common among men, women are more likely to die from them.

**Do you have the potential to suffer a silent heart attack?** Check with your health care provider if you have these risks for heart attack:

- Smoking or chewing tobacco
- Prior heart attack
- Age
- Family history of heart disease
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Lack of regular exercise

Do your best  
to boost your  
health and  
control heart  
disease risk  
factors.

## QuikQuiz™: The Lowdown on Added Sugar

**ANSWERS** *Continued from front. >>*

- 1. b** – Added sugars include white and brown sugar, added sweeteners (honey, syrups, etc.) and any foods made with these items. The sugar in milk, vegetables and fruit is naturally occurring; it is not added.
- 2. b** – The AHA recommends no more than 6 teaspoons of **added sugar** for women, and 9 for men. How much added sugar do most Americans get? It's around 22 teaspoons – that's too much. Excess sugar is linked with an increased risk of heart disease.
- 3. False** – There's no nutritional need or benefit that comes from eating added sugar. Its only value is pleasure from its sweet taste.
- 4. d** – For those who consume 25% or more of calories from added sugar, the risk of death from heart disease or stroke is nearly tripled.

## Functional Fitness

**While regular exercise helps protect your health,** it's also important to strengthen your mobility through **functional fitness** movements. These exercises work various muscles simultaneously to improve core strength and balance, and reduce injury risk as you age.

**Try these:**

### 1. Squat to chair:

This exercise supports basic functions (e.g., sitting, getting up from a chair, picking up items from the floor) by building core and entire lower body strength.



**To start:** Standing with feet shoulder-width apart and chest upright, bend your knees, push hips back and lower yourself to the chair. Once seated or just touching the chair, lean forward slightly and push through feet to rise back to starting position. Aim for 5 to 10 repetitions.

### 2. Bicep curls:

The ability to lift things, whether groceries or a grandchild, is indispensable – and becomes more difficult with age. By lifting weights, you'll strengthen and keep flexible muscles needed to lift, stretch, reach and pull.



**To start:** Seated on an exercise ball or a chair, hold 1- or 2-pound weights in palms at your side, facing inward. Slowly bend 1 elbow, lift the weight toward your chest and rotate so your palm faces your shoulder. Pause. Then slowly lower your arm and rotate back to starting position. Repeat with other arm; aim for 8 to 12 repetitions.

Training your muscles to work together efficiently can help keep you safe and mobile for years to come.

**Note:** Get your health care provider's okay first.

“The **world** is round so that **friendship** may encircle it. — *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*”



## Spread the love on February 14, National Donor Day.

Every 10 minutes, a person is added to the national organ transplant waiting list, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing, and just 1 donor could save 8 lives. If you're not registered as an organ donor, consider the difference you could make. Learn more at [organdonor.gov](http://organdonor.gov).



Smart Moves toolkit is at [www.personalbest.com/extras/18V2tools](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/18V2tools).

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