



February 2006

February is American Heart Month

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), approximately 13 million Americans have coronary heart disease. Also, each year, over one million people have heart attacks and about a half a million die from the disease. Unfortunately, heart disease develops so gradually over a lifetime that people often don't know they have it until after the heart is damaged.

The best way to protect your heart is to approach risk factors – which increase your susceptibility to the disease – from two perspectives. First, acknowledge the *uncontrollable* risk factors that apply only to you and inform your doctor about them. Uncontrollable risk factors include specific family history (such as a father or brother who had heart disease before 55, or a mother or sister who had heart disease before 65). Second, address and minimize the risk factors that are controllable. Controllable risk factors refer to lifestyle risks such as smoking, diet, and exercise.

Even if you have uncontrollable risk factors for heart disease, you can manage the controllable ones. To protect your heart and cardiovascular system, follow these suggestions:

- **Don't Smoke**

If you are a smoker, stop. Even long-term smokers can reduce their risk of heart attack to equal that of non-smokers within just two years of stopping.

- **Improve Your Eating Habits**

Consult with a professional and create a nutritional program designed for you. At a minimum, avoid unhealthy fats, eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and choose whole grains when possible.

- **Get Moving**

Exercise strengthens the heart, helps with weight control, and lowers blood pressure. Always check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

- **Know Your Numbers**

Your cholesterol, blood glucose, blood pressure levels, and body mass index (BMI) are good indicators of health. Get tested regularly to determine whether these indicators are within the normal limits. If they are not, see your doctor and take the action to get them within healthier levels.

- **Never Ignore Symptoms**

The pain of a heart attack can feel like bad heartburn. Don't ignore pain or discomfort. See your doctor if you think you may be having heart problems or a heart attack. The sooner you get treatment, the greater the chance that you can prevent further damage to the heart muscle. Some of the symptoms of a heart attack include:

- Pressure or crushing pain in your chest, sometimes with sweating, nausea or vomiting.
- Pain that extends from your chest into the jaw, left arm or left shoulder.
- Tightness in your chest.
- Shortness of breath for more than a couple of seconds.

Visit the American Heart Association Web site at <http://www.americanheart.org> to learn more about heart health.

Deskercise for Your Health

Nobody considers desk work to be risky. But if you sit and work for hours without a break, you can develop aches and pains as our bodies were not meant to sit all day doing the same movement. So, it is important to remember to take a one- to two-minute break every 30 to 45 minutes. Also, remember to fidget – change positions frequently – about every 10 or 15 seconds. You can also prevent chronic pain caused by long hours of desk work by doing some simple stretches right at your desk.

With the exercises below, stretch to the point at which you can feel the stretch, but not to the point where it becomes uncomfortable. If you begin taking a regular break to do these exercises at your desk, you'll feel a big improvement right away. Do these stretches two, three or more times each day. Always check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

Head Tilt

Relax your shoulders be sure to keep them down. Let your head roll forward, chin to chest. Return to starting position. Next, slowly tilt your head to the right, ear to shoulder. Repeat on the left side. Hold each position for a count of five. Repeat five times. Relax.

Wood-chopper

You're not really swinging an ax as you do this exercise, so keep the motions gentle and smooth and

go for a slow stretch to relieve the tension in your shoulders and elbows. From a standing position, clasp hands and hold them close to your right shoulder, as though holding an ax there. Gently swing an imaginary ax by straightening your elbows and moving your hands toward your left thigh. Raise your clasped hands to your left shoulder, and swing the ax toward your right thigh. Repeat on both sides seven or eight times.

Fly Away

Place your fingertips on your shoulders, elbows pointing out to the sides. Pull your elbows back as far as you can. Push your elbows forward and try to touch them together. Repeat 10 times. Now, keeping your fingertips on your shoulders, lift your elbows up and then push them down to your sides, as if you're trying to fly. Repeat 10 times.

Shoulder Roll

Sit or stand erect. Lift your shoulders as high as you can then roll them forward. Push them down and then pull your shoulders back, and then return to starting position. Repeat in the opposite direction. Repeat three to five times.

In the coming months, look for more *Deskercises* to help you stay flexible and pain-free at your desk.

Lighten Up with FOH

Lighten Up with FOH Recipe

It is important to eat nutritious meals, but do you have to give up snacks, desserts, and your favorite treats? Absolutely not! Instead, reduce the amount of sugar and unhealthy fats in the desserts you eat. Remember, healthy eating does not mean giving up occasional fats and healthy sweets. It means being selective and choosing ingredients wisely.

Here are few easy choices for low-fat desserts:

- Fruit—fresh, frozen, canned or dried.

- Low-fat yogurt with nuts or fruit.
- Low-fat or low sugar ice cream with no more than 3 grams of fat per half cup.
- Frozen yogurt—fat-free, low-fat, or nonfat.
- Flavored gelatin.
- Two ounces of nutritious salt-free nuts.

Consult your doctor, nutritionist or dietitian to determine your dietary limits

How to Deal with Difficult Co-Workers

Most of us have had to deal with the unpleasant or even hostile colleague from time to time. Dealing with difficult co-workers can waste time, reduce job productivity, and affect morale. So learning to deal with difficult co-workers is essential in order to do well on the job.

One of the biggest challenges of dealing with difficult co-workers is that often they don't actually see themselves as a problem so confronting them can be unproductive. It is important to remember that when dealing with difficult people, you really have little control over the personality and behavior of the individual, and efforts to change their behavior may do little more than frustrate you. Your best option is to focus on your own behavior, and what you can control. Below are some general guidelines.

- Ask yourself whether your co-worker's unpleasant behavior has a significant impact on your job performance. If not, it may be much easier for you to ignore the behavior.
- Don't take it personally. Most times, aggressive co-workers lash out inappropriately at others to relieve stress or frustration, and you become the convenient recipient of their anger. Yes, it's not fair but again, you may be able to limit contact and avoid these situations.

- Keep your sense of humor. That doesn't mean laughing at the co-worker or others, it means trying to see the situation from a humorous perspective to keep things in perspective.
- Look for a learning opportunity. At minimum, you can learn from a difficult co-worker how *not* to behave.

Sometimes management is aware of problems with a difficult employee but may be unsure of how to deal with them. If you must work closely with a disruptive co-worker speak to your supervisor to explore your options. If you don't have to work closely with a problem employee and you decide to ignore or accept the situation as it is, it may be difficult at first, but you can learn to simply refuse to let yourself be bothered by the behavior of another person for which you are in no way responsible.

Every job is likely to have at least a few people who act in ways that bother you occasionally. If you can learn to live with some differences that don't matter in the long run, you may find that your co-workers overlook some of the things about you that bother them. However, you are not obligated to endure abusive behavior. Check with your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and your supervisor for more support and suggestions for dealing with difficult work situations.

"You cannot control what happens to you, but you can control your attitude toward what happens to you, and in that, you will be mastering change rather than allowing it to master you."

-- Brian Tracy