

STOPS CHAOS

STRESS - isolated periods of stress can cause dangerous spikes in blood pressure, if it becomes chronic stress, it can also impair physical health, and lead to increases in other risk factors, e.g. weight-gain, increased smoking, and hypertension. Encourage relaxation techniques, and quiet times!



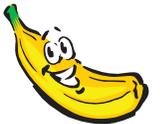
TEMPERANCE - reduce alcohol consumption, however, total abstinence is not required as a little tittle now and then can be beneficial, especially red wine! However, this isn't a valid reason for encouraging people to start to drink alcohol, if they are not already doing so!



ORAL HYGIENE means healthy gums and teeth, and is vital to the enjoyment of food. The development of periodontal disease (#1 cause is lack of oral hygiene), is associated with increased risk of heart disease. Regular dental checkups are crucial.



POTASSIUM is vital for healthy heart functioning. Ensure a diet rich with natural sources of potassium. Good sources are spinach, baked potatoes, and most types of beans, e.g. baked and kidney beans. Recommended daily amount is 4700mg per day.



SODIUM - too much sodium can increase hypertension - so go steady with the salt. Reduction of salt intake can help lower to lower blood pressure. Watch out for those sodium-filled processed foods. Less than 2400mg is the daily recommended intake - that is less than a teaspoon!



CHOLESTEROL is needed by the body, but the body actually produces almost all that it needs. Excess cholesterol is usually caused from excessive dietary intake, from meat, fatty, and fried foods. All adults should have cholesterol levels checked at least every 5 years after age 20. Modify diet by preparing food using healthier alternatives, e.g. steaming, grilling, poaching. Remove excess fat...don't add to it!



HYPERTENSION check to see if blood pressure is near to ideal of 120/80. Remember with age, there is a tendency for the top number (systolic) to increase. Above 140/90 is considered hypertension. For those in high risk groups e.g. diabetics, and African Americans, 130/80 is considered hypertension!



ACTIVITY is any type of regular physical activity that helps to keep the heart muscle healthy. The heart needs exercise - a sedentary lifestyle is simply bad for cardiovascular health. Whatever level of starting ability, the ultimate goal is participate in moderate, and eventually more vigorous exercise several times a week. Activities that are considered fun might encourage greater enthusiasm (e.g. dancing, swimming, team sports, even Nintendo's Wii games can get the heart rate up!)



OBESITY- when you are overweight, the heart has to work harder to supply all the extra tissue with nutrients. When trying to lose weight be sure to set realistic goals. If overweight try to lose a little or at least stabilize weight. A modest weight-loss of 5-10% can have a beneficial impact on general health. Even just 10lbs weight loss can actually help reduce hypertension.



SMOKING - reduce or ideally stop smoking altogether - it is never too late, and after a few years real benefits can be gained by slowing the decrease of lung function that would have occurred with continued smoking.

