



## Heart-Healthy Every Day!

Did you know that cardiovascular disease (CVD)—including heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure—is the number one killer of women and men in the United States? It is a leading cause of disability, preventing Americans from working and enjoying family activities. Since February is American Heart Month, we thought this would be a great time to give you some tips that will help you to improve your heart health day by day. You can use these to power up your current health objectives or create some new ones!

### Get regular health screenings.

High blood pressure and high cholesterol can damage your heart and blood vessels. But without testing for them, you probably won't know whether you have these conditions. Regular screenings can tell you what your numbers are and whether you need to take action.



### Have healthy snacks on hand.

The easiest way to avoid temptation at home is to give rid of the junk-food snacks taking up valuable shelf space. Throw away the foods that don't have much nutritional value and replace them with heart-healthy treats such as almonds, low-fat popcorn, carrots, celery, hummus, and apples with peanut butter.



### Get enough quality sleep.

Sleep deprivation can do more than leave you yawning throughout the day; it can harm your health. People who don't get enough sleep have a higher risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes and depression. Most adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night. If you wake up without your alarm clock and you feel refreshed, you're getting enough sleep. But if you're constantly reaching for the snooze button and it's a struggle to get out of bed, you need more sleep each night.



**Lose weight.** More than 2/3 of our American adult population is overweight, with 1/3 of us in the obese category. These statistics are especially concerning since obesity is now recognized as a major, independent risk factor for heart disease. Your Body mass index (BMI) assesses your body weight relative to height. It's a useful, indirect measure of body composition because it correlates highly with body fat in most people. If your body mass index is 25.0 or higher, you will benefit by bringing your number down below 25. If your BMI is 30.0 or higher, you are at significant risk for heart health problems. Calculate your BMI now.



**Get active.** Living an active life is one of the most rewarding gifts you can give yourself and those you love. Simply put, daily physical activity increases your length and quality of life. If you get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity each day (like brisk walking), five times per week, you can almost guarantee yourself a healthier and more satisfying life, while lowering your risks for heart disease, stroke and diabetes. The American Heart Association has a great poster on activity recommendations. Click here to view it and (see our article on taking 10,000 steps each day on the next page).

# 10,000 Steps a Day: Your Path to Fitness

Medical authorities around the world agree that taking 10,000 each day is a healthy number to aim for. The American Heart Association uses the 10,000 steps metric as a guideline to follow for improving health and decreasing risk of heart disease. 10,000 steps a day is also a rough equivalent to the Surgeon General's recommendation to accumulate 30 minutes of activity most days of the week. The benefits are many: lower BMI, reduced waist size, increased energy, and less risk for Type II diabetes. In fact, a recent study of the 10,000 steps a day method reported conclusive health benefits. Click here for a great guide on fitting walking into your life, courtesy of kera.org

Wearing a pedometer is an easy way to track your steps each day. Start by wearing the pedometer every day for one week. Put it on when you get up in the morning and wear it until bed time. Record your daily steps in a log or notebook. By the end of the week you will know your average daily steps. You might be surprised how many (or how few) steps you get in each day. 10,000 steps daily is approximately 5 miles. Unless you have a very active lifestyle or profession, you probably don't reach 10,000 steps on a given day without putting some effort into your activity. This could be a lifestyle change such as walking to work, or the addition of an exercise routine to your day.

**Use your imagination to to get extra steps into your lifestyle! Here are a few ideas to get you started:**

- ▶ Take a walk with your spouse, child or friend
- ▶ Walk the dog
- ▶ Use the stairs instead of the elevator
- ▶ Park farther from the store
- ▶ Better yet, walk to the store
- ▶ Get up to change the channel
- ▶ Window shop
- ▶ Plan a walking meeting
- ▶ Walk over to visit a neighbor

If you have any health concerns, seek your physician's advice prior to starting or changing your exercise routine.



## Recipe: Heart-Healthy Mac 'n Cheese

### Ingredients

Nonstick cooking spray  
4 ounces whole wheat macaroni  
1/2 cup onion-garlic puree (see recipe)\*  
1/2 teaspoon dry mustard  
Pinch cayenne pepper  
1 cup grated reduced-fat cheddar cheese  
1/3 cup nonfat Greek yogurt  
1/4 cup whole wheat panko bread crumbs  
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese  
1 large Vidalia onion  
9 garlic cloves  
1/2 teaspoon salt substitute (we used Mrs. Dash)  
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Nutritional information per serving (makes 4 servings)  
calories: 237 | 17g protein | 31g carbohydrates  
3g fiber | 7g fat

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Mist an 8-by-8-inch baking dish with cooking spray; set it aside.
2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add macaroni and cook according to package directions, drain.
3. Meanwhile, bring onion-garlic puree, mustard, and cayenne to a simmer in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring often. Whisk in cheddar until melted. Remove from heat and whisk in yogurt.
4. In a medium bowl, toss the macaroni with the cheese sauce. Season with salt to taste. Pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish and sprinkle panko over the top. Top with Parmesan.
5. Bake until Parmesan is melted and macaroni is hot throughout, about 10 minutes.

### \* Onion-Garlic Puree

Bechamel sauce (a mixture of milk, butter, and flour) plays a major role in many mac and cheese recipes. This aromatic blend of onion and garlic builds flavor and texture without the fat (makes 1 cup).

**Step 1.** Combine 1 large Vidalia onion, 9 garlic cloves (roughly chopped), and 1/2 cup water in a microwave-safe bowl. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.

**Step 2.** Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and microwave on high 10 minutes.

**Step 3.** Pour the mixture into a blender; blend until smooth. Season with salt substitute and black pepper to taste. (Store in a covered container in the fridge for up to 72 hours.)