

March 2021

Live. Life. Well.

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Easy Ways to Monitor Your Heart's Health

Wearable health devices have become popular in recent years. From smart phone apps to heart rate monitors, we can collect biometric data for just about anything. Monitoring your heart's health allows you to make better decisions about your lifestyle habits. Metrics take the guesswork out of managing conditions like diabetes, hypertension, and kidney disease. By reviewing your health data regularly, you can recognize changes in your health earlier and make necessary adjustments to avoid further complications.

Here are some ways you can monitor your heart's health:

Check your cholesterol

Are your lab values up to date? Make sure to monitor your health-related lab values regularly. Aetna provides an annual physical at no cost to covered district employees. Plan to take advantage of this wellness benefit.

Take your blood pressure

Is your blood pressure within the normal range for you? Check your blood pressure periodically to make sure there are no concerns. Ask your healthcare provider what your blood pressure target should be.

Monitor your heart rate

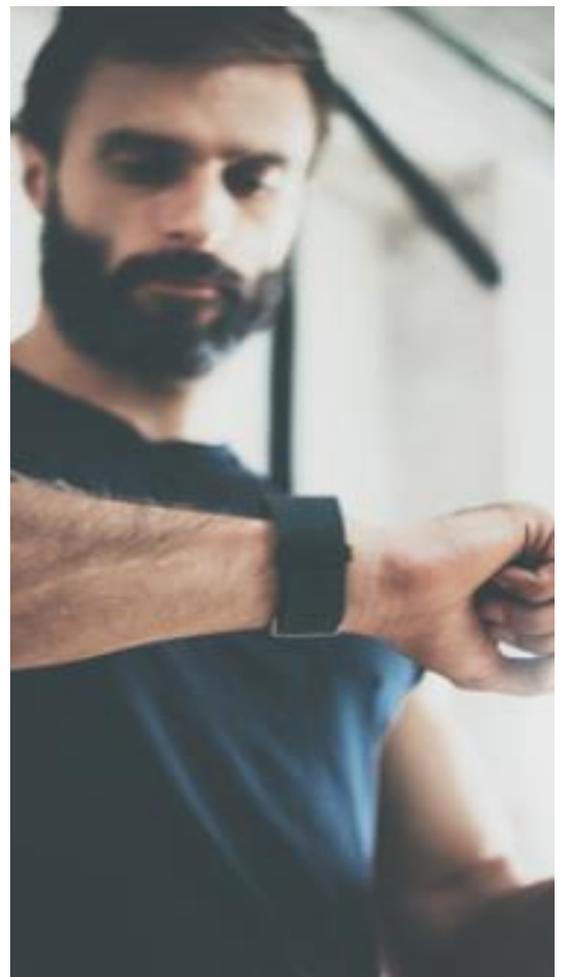
Are you exercising within your target heart rate zone? Many heart rate monitors can give you real-time feedback about whether you are exercising within your target heart rate zone. Always consult with your physician before making significant changes to your exercise routine.

Check your blood sugar

Are your blood sugar levels within normal ranges? Even if you do not have a diagnosis like diabetes, you can monitor your blood sugar values occasionally to make sure there are no changes. High blood sugars can make blood vessels sticky, which can cause fats to build up and limit blood flow.

Time your exercise

Are you including enough cardiovascular exercise? Experts recommend accumulating at least 150 minutes of physical activity every week. Use an app, pedometer, or fitness tracker to keep tabs on your exercise habits.



Remember to consult with your doctor to see how often you should be monitoring your heart-related metrics.

Fighting Inflammation with Food

Inflammation is your body's natural response to an infection or injury. Sometimes it shows up in visible forms, such as with pain, redness, and swelling, but sometimes it is less visible, causing damage slowly and silently.

Unlike acute inflammation, which occurs only briefly, chronic inflammation tends to linger. Ongoing inflammation has been shown to play a key role in many health conditions like diabetes, [arthritis](#)¹, cancer, asthma, allergies, heart disease, and even Alzheimer's disease. Chronic inflammation has also been linked to carrying excess body weight, smoking, and being physically inactive.

In recent years, it has been discovered that specific foods play a role in inflammation. Foods that are known to trigger inflammation include soda, high-fat red meat, hydrogenated fats like shortening, and highly processed foods. In contrast, plant-based foods that are high in antioxidants and phytochemicals have been shown to possess anti-inflammatory properties.



Here are some healthy anti-inflammatory foods to consider including in your menu rotation:

Herbs and Spices

While we generally think of herbs and spices as flavorings, many contain beneficial antioxidants. For example, turmeric contains curcumin, a phytochemical that has been [shown](#)² to reduce inflammation by inhibiting mediators like cytokines.

Nuts

[Studies](#)³ have shown an association between higher consumption of tree nuts and reduced inflammatory biomarkers, like C-reactive protein (CRP).

Green Tea

Green tea, which contains polyphenol compounds called catechins, have been [shown](#)⁴ to possess anti-inflammatory properties that are protective against cardiovascular disease.

Green Leafy Vegetables

Green leafy vegetables are known to be high in magnesium, a mineral that has been [shown](#)⁵ to have an inverse relationship with inflammation.

Fish

Fatty fish, like salmon, trout, and mackerel, are higher in omega-3 fatty acids that have been [found](#)⁶ to be cardioprotective.



To help reduce or prevent chronic inflammation, choose a wide variety nutrient-dense foods that have anti-inflammatory properties.

1. <https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/healthy-living/nutrition/anti-inflammatory/anti-inflammatory-diet>

2. <https://pi.oregonstate.edu/mic/dietary-factors/phytochemicals/curcumin>

3. https://academic.oup.com/ajcn/article/104/3/722/4564733?itm_medium=sidebar&itm_content=ajcn&itm_source=trendmd-idget&itm_campaign=trendmd-pilot

4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2748751/>

5. <http://www.doils.net/v1/links/256634.pdf>

6. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Michelle_Krahe/publication/23445016_Anti-inflammatory_and_cardioprotective_effects_of_n-polyunsaturated_fatty_acids_and_plant_sterols_in_hyperlipidemic_individuals/links/5b556441aca27217ffb32725/Anti-inflammatory-and-cardioprotective-effects-of-n-3-polyunsaturated-fatty-acids-and-plant-sterols-in-hyperlipidemic-individuals.pdf



How Getting Better Sleep Can Protect Your Heart

Sleep is something you may not think too much about unless you struggle to get enough of it. Lack of consistent, restful sleep has been linked to obesity in numerous studies, and sleep deprivation also poses some risks when it comes to cardiovascular health.

Experts [recommend](#)⁷ that most adults get at least seven (7) hours of sleep each day. [Evidence](#)⁸ suggests that getting less than six hours of sleep each night over a period of years could contribute to cardiovascular disease, especially in women. Not getting enough sleep has been associated with coronary artery calcification, as well as poor decision-making when it comes to food choices. For these reasons, getting enough sleep is critical for heart health.

To get better sleep, try these easy tips:

Set a bedtime alarm

Do you have a tendency to stay up too late? Try setting a bedtime alarm to maintain a more consistent sleep schedule.

Use earplugs

If you are easily distracted by noises and have trouble falling asleep, try using earplugs when you sleep.

Meditate

Meditating before bed can help you relieve tension, calm your mind, and prepare you for sleep.

Use aromatherapy

Essential oils can be particularly helpful when it comes to relaxing in the evening. As an experiment, try placing a few drops of lavender essential oil on your pillow at night.

Drink some tea

Enjoy a cup of herbal tea before bed. Most herbal teas contain less caffeine than black or oolong varieties.



Simply put, getting sufficient restful sleep on a regular basis can help protect your heart.

7. https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/how_much_sleep.html

8. <https://www.a.c.c.org/about-a.c.c/press-releases/2019/01/14/13/57/sleeping-less-than-six-hours-a-night-may-increase-cardiovascular-risk>

MARCH IS NATIONAL **COLORECTAL CANCER** AWARENESS MONTH



- Among cancers that affect both men and women, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Every year, approximately 140,000 Americans get colorectal cancer and more than 50,000 people perish from it.
- Risk increases with age. More than 90% of colorectal cancers occur in people age 50 and older.
- Precancerous polyps and colorectal cancer do not always cause symptoms, especially at first. You could have polyps or colorectal cancer and not know it. That is why having a screening test is so important. If you have symptoms, they may include—
 - **Blood in or on the stool (bowel movement)**
 - **Stomach pain, aches, or cramps that do not go away**
 - **Losing weight and you don't know why**

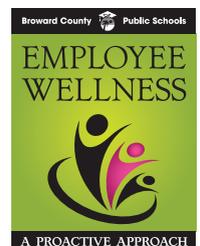
These symptoms may be caused by something other than cancer. If you have any of them, see your doctor.

- There are several screening test options. Talk with your medical professional about which is right for you.

Source: Center for Disease Control

cdc.gov/cancer/dcpc/resources/features/colorectalawareness/index.htm

Colorectal cancer screening saves lives. If you're 50 years old or older, get screened. In fact, benefit eligible employees on the School Board's Aetna insurance plans, will receive a preventative colonoscopy as part of your wellness screening if you are over the age of fifty.



Gum Disease And The Connection To Heart Disease

Study after study has shown that people who have poor oral health (such as gum disease or tooth loss) have higher rates of cardiovascular problems such as heart attack or stroke as opposed to people with good oral health.

Why would cardiovascular disease and poor oral health be connected?

- The bacteria that infect the gums, causes gingivitis and periodontitis, also travels to blood vessels elsewhere in the body where they cause damage; tiny blood clots, heart attack and stroke may follow. Supporting this idea is the finding of remnants of oral bacteria within atherosclerotic blood vessels located far from the mouth. Antibiotic treatment has not proven effective at reducing cardiovascular risk.
- Rather than bacteria causing the problem, it's the body's immune response - inflammation - that sets off a cascade of vascular damage throughout the body, including effects on the heart and brain.

Gingivitis is the early stage of gum disease. Gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, is an infection of the tissues that surround your teeth, and is caused by a buildup of plaque. In its early stages, symptoms may include:

- [gums that bleed](#) easily
- red, swollen, tender gums
- bad breath or halitosis

Some factors that can put you at higher risk of developing gingivitis include:

- poor dental care
 - [smoking](#) or chewing tobacco
 - genetics
 - crooked teeth that are hard to keep clean
 - [pregnancy](#)
 - [diabetes](#)
- 
- medications, including steroids, certain types of anti-epilepsy drugs, cancer therapy drugs, some calcium channel blockers and oral contraceptives

This might sound scary, but gum disease is still reversible. The American Dental Association believes that eliminating this infection can be as easy as trip to the dentist office for a professional cleaning, as well as daily [brushing](#) and [flossing](#). All benefit eligible Broward County School employees have access to a dental plan. District staff are encouraged to utilize their benefit plans to avoid the adverse effects of gum disease and other health problems that can result from non-care. Dental cleanings can be obtained at least two (2) times per year on all School Board plans.



Recipe: Rosemary Scented Veggie Stack

INGREDIENTS

- 4 portabella mushrooms, gills scraped off
- 1 sweet yellow onion, sliced into ¼-inch thick rings
- 1 red, yellow, or orange bell pepper, sliced into quarters length wise
- Balsamic vinegar
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary, leaves removed from stem and chopped
- ½ cup reduced fat goat cheese
- 4 whole grain hamburger buns

Total Time (Cook and Prep):
30 minutes

Servings: 4



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Oil the grates of a grill or grill pan. Heat grill on medium-high.
2. Place a small saucepan on the grill and fill with ½ cup balsamic vinegar. Allow vinegar to come to a boil and reduce heat until it becomes a syrup.
3. Place the mushrooms bottom-side up on the grill. Place the remaining vegetables on the grill. Pour 1 tbs. balsamic vinegar and ¼ tsp. rosemary into each of the mushrooms.
4. Cook vegetables about 4-5 minutes. Turn over onion and bell pepper and cook an additional 5 minutes.

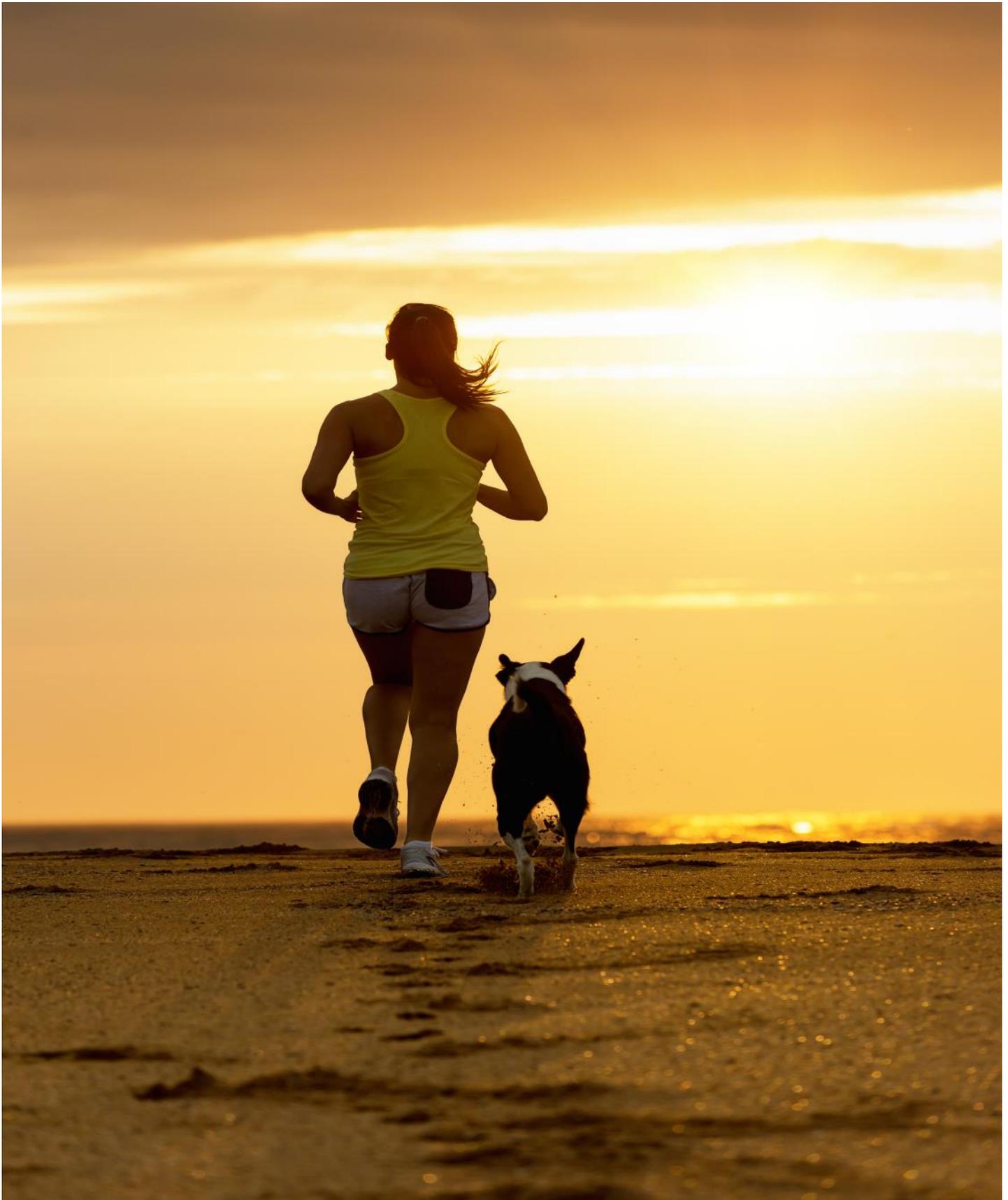
NUTRITION INFO

per serving)

Calories kcal	169
Carbs g	28
Fat g	4
Protein g	9
Sodium mg	0
Sugar g	0

Source:

<https://urockgirl.com/your-two-new-favorite-burg-er-alternatives/>



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