

February is American Heart Month

Heart Disease is the # 1 cause of death in U.S. - about every 25 seconds, an American will have a coronary event. The most common heart disease in the U.S. is **coronary heart disease**, which often appears as a heart attack.

The chance of developing coronary heart disease can be reduced by taking steps to prevent and control factors that put people at greater risk.

High blood pressure (HBP) is a serious condition that can lead to coronary heart disease (also called coronary artery disease), heart failure, stroke, kidney failure, and other health problems.

Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension

The **DASH diet** is:

- low in saturated fat
- cholesterol
- total fat
- a lifelong approach to healthy eating designed to help treat or prevent high blood pressure

The **DASH diet** encourages you to:

- reduce sodium
- eat a variety of foods rich in nutrients that help lower blood pressure, such as potassium, calcium and magnesium

The **DASH diet** emphasizes eating:

- fruits
- vegetables
- whole grains
- low-fat dairy foods
- some fish, poultry and legumes
- red meat, sweets and fats in small amounts

Research has found the **DASH diet** to be an effective way to lower blood pressure in people who have slightly elevated high blood pressure (prehypertension) and in those with mild to moderate hypertension.

For those with mild to moderate hypertension, research has found the effect of following the **DASH diet** is similar to the blood pressure-lowering effect of taking one high blood pressure medication. When those same people followed the **DASH diet** and made additional healthy lifestyle changes, such as exercising regularly, losing weight and further reducing dietary sodium, the effect was equal to taking two drugs used together to lower blood pressure.

Because the diet is a healthy way of eating, it offers health benefits beyond just lowering blood pressure. Following the **DASH diet** may help protect you against osteoporosis, cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes. While this diet is not a weight-loss program, you may lose unwanted pounds by following the diet, because it can help guide you toward healthier meals and snacks.

Talk to your doctor about the **DASH diet**. Together, you can create a comprehensive program focused on reducing blood pressure that includes the **DASH diet** and other positive lifestyle choices. Although you may still need to take some medication to control blood pressure, it is likely that you will need much less medication than you would require without making these healthy changes.

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov)
mayoclinic.org (medical edge newspaper, Oct 2011)
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Keys to Exercise Success

From Go4Life - National Institute on Aging at NIH

Include physical activity in your everyday life.

Try to find ways to make physical activity easy, interesting, and fun. Think of activities that you enjoy and find appealing. To add a social twist, invite a friend to become your “exercise buddy.”

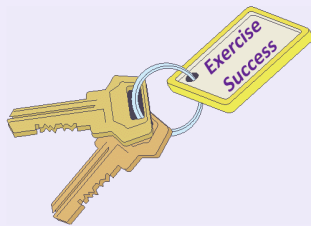
Try activities that might not seem like exercise.

- Do some arm curls with a carton of milk or a 1-pound can while putting groceries away.
- Walk to a coworker’s/neighbor’s place instead of calling or e-mailing.
- Park at the far end of the lot and walk briskly to the store.

Try all four types of exercise. When you start an exercise routine, it can be easy to fall into a rut of doing the same activities every day. But, if you mix it up with lots of different activities, you are more likely to stick with the habit over time without getting bored.

The four types to try are:

- Endurance
- Strength
- Balance
- Flexibility



Plan for breaks in the routine. Your days aren’t all alike, and that means that sometimes you will miss a few days of physical activity. Vacations, visits from family and friends, or unexpected events can interrupt your exercise routine. But don’t get discouraged. You can get back on track!

- Try to remember the reasons you started exercising and the goals you set for yourself.
- Consider asking family or friends to help by encouraging you or exercising with you.
- Don’t push yourself beyond your limits. Try something comfortable or easier if you don’t like an activity you’ve started.
- Be flexible. If your grandchildren are visiting, schedule your exercise break during their naptime, or take them with you when you go for a walk.

For more tips on starting—and sticking with—an exercise routine, visit the *Go4Life* website at www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life. *Go4Life* is an exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging at NIH. It has exercises, success stories, and free materials to help you get ready, start exercising, and keep going.

Happy Valentine's Day

Crispy potato skins

By Mayo Clinic staff

Dietitian’s tip: You can use any number of herbs or spices to season the potato skins. Try fresh basil, chives, dill, garlic, cayenne pepper, caraway seed, tarragon or thyme.

Serves 2

Ingredients

- 2 medium russet potatoes
- Butter-flavored cooking spray
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 375 F.
- Wash the potatoes and pierce with a fork. Place in the oven and bake until the skins are crisp, about 1 hour.
- Carefully — potatoes will be very hot — cut the potatoes in half and scoop out the pulp, leaving about 1/8 inch of the potato flesh attached to the skin. Save the pulp for another use.
- Spray the inside of each potato skin with butter-flavored cooking spray. Press in the rosemary and pepper. Return the skins to the oven for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Analysis (per serving)

Serving size: 2 potato skin halves

Calories	114	Cholesterol	0 mg
Protein	2 g	Carbohydrate	27 g
Sodium	12 mg	Potassium	332 mg
Fiber	4 g	Total fat	0 g
Calcium	20 mg	Saturated fat	0 g
		Monounsaturated fat	0 g