

healthy heart

HEALTH NEWS AND INFORMATION

Laugh tracks

For a good laugh:

■ Visit www.ahajokes.com. You'll find clean jokes, audio files, video clips and cartoons sure to tickle your funny bone.

■ Rent a movie. The three funniest American films, as announced by the American Film Institute in 2000: *Some Like it Hot* (1959), *Tootsie* (1982) and *Dr. Strangelove* (1964).

■ Read a book. Consider something by humor authors Dave Barry, Bill Cosby or Erma Bombeck.



Chuckle for your blood vessels

Planning to rent a movie?

If so, a funny flick may be better for you than a movie that creates feelings of stress.

In a study, researchers found that watching scenes from comedy movies helped blood vessels relax in 19 of 20 participants. Average blood flow increased 22 percent.

Watching stress-evoking films, however, led to blood vessel constriction in 14 of the 20 participants. Average blood flow decreased by 35 percent.

THE FOOT BONE'S CONNECTED to the ankle bone. The backbone's connected to the neck bone. And the funny bone's connected to the heart.

OK, that last line isn't part of the well-known song. But research suggests there may be some truth to it.

In one study, cardiologists found that people with heart disease were 40 percent less likely to laugh in certain situations than people of the same age without heart disease.

"We know that exercising, not smoking, and eating foods low in saturated fat will reduce the risk of heart disease," said lead investigator Michael Miller, M.D. "Perhaps regular hearty laughter should be added to the list."

To get your daily dose, humor therapist Judy Goldblum-Carlton offers these suggestions:

■ Watch funny movies. With a group, laughter may come easier.

Heart disease isn't funny. Call Community Health Line at **816-271-4000**.

■ Listen to a humorous program in the car.

■ Create a personal humor collection. Include anything that makes you laugh.

■ Visit the zoo. Monkeys, in particular, are often good for a laugh.

■ Finally, don't take yourself too seriously. Learn to laugh at yourself, Goldblum-Carlton says.



HEALTHY facts

INFECTED GUMS MAY RAISE THE RISK OF HEART DISEASE

One recent study suggests that chronic inflammation related to gum infection may boost the risk of developing coronary heart disease. Other studies suggest links between gum infections and heart attack.

—Archives of Internal Medicine

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE DRUG MAY LEAD TO BIRTH DEFECTS

Studies suggest that ACE inhibitors may boost the risk of birth defects when used by mothers during pregnancy. Based on these findings, the American Heart Association advises women not to become pregnant while on ACE inhibitors.

—The New England Journal of Medicine



wired IS AN EKG FOR ME?



HOW DOCTORS USE ELECTROCARDIOGRAMS

YOU'VE SEEN THEM ON A ZILLION medical dramas, but what exactly are EKG machines? And when would you need to be hooked up to one?

EKG (also sometimes abbreviated as ECG) stands for electrocardiogram, which is a visible recording of the electrical activity of your heart.

Although you may not associate the body with electricity, the pumping action of the heart is controlled by small electrical impulses.

An EKG machine uses electrode pads—placed on the arms, legs and chest—to translate these impulses as

a series of peak-and-valley images on paper or on a screen.

EKGs can help detect:

- Abnormal heartbeats and rhythm problems (arrhythmias).
- Decreased blood or oxygen supply to the heart.
- Signs that a heart attack has occurred or may occur.
- Damage to the heart.
- Inflammation of the heart (myocarditis).

A doctor who suspects any of the conditions mentioned above can use an EKG to verify whether you have a problem.

If your physician suggests the

test, don't hesitate to ask why and ask for more details about how it works.

Need a doctor? Call
816-271-7991 or **800-447-1098** for a referral.

Source: American Medical Association

healthyheart

HEALTHY HEART is published as a health improvement service for members of COMMUNITY HEALTH PLAN's Cardiac Connections program, 137 N. Belt Highway, St. Joseph, MO 64506, 800-990-9247.

Linda Bahrke
Plan Administrator

Robert Chabon, MD
Medical Director

Amy Owens
Marketing/Communications

Information in HEALTHY HEART comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your health care provider.

Models may be used in photos and illustrations.
Copyright © 2007 Coffey Communications, Inc.

HTN19792p

diabetes heart AND YOUR

IF YOU HAVE DIABETES, YOUR heart could use some attention.

That's because diabetes puts you at greater risk for heart disease. With diabetes, your blood sugar level can be much higher than normal. Too much sugar in your blood can damage your blood vessels, which can lead to heart disease.

But there are steps you can take to control your diabetes and lower your risk for heart disease. The American Diabetes Association says you can:

Keep your blood sugar under control. Exercising, eating a healthy diet and taking medications prescribed by your doctor can help you keep your blood sugar level near normal.

Maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight, losing even 10 pounds can help lower your risk for heart disease.

Change your cholesterol levels. Too much bad cholesterol (LDL) can clog your arteries. Not enough good cholesterol (HDL) can

lead to a buildup of bad cholesterol. A healthy, low-fat diet and medications can help you control your cholesterol.

Control your blood pressure.

Keep your blood pressure at a healthy level by making lifestyle changes, such as losing weight and exercising. Medications are also available to control blood pressure.

Stay physically active. Work with your doctor on developing an exercise plan that is right for you. At least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise on most days of the week is recommended.

Don't smoke. If you smoke and have diabetes, you double your risk of getting heart disease.

Work with your doctor and make some lifestyle changes to keep your diabetes under control and lower your risk for heart disease.

To speak with a disease management nurse, call **816-271-7862.**



Visit the American Diabetes Association (www.diabetes.org).

Know your numbers

Keeping track of certain numbers is vital if you have diabetes. The American Diabetes Association and other experts recommend keeping close tabs on these:

■ **A1C.** This number shows your average blood sugar level over the past two to three months. Aim for an A1C of less than 7 percent.

■ **Blood pressure.** Aim to keep your blood pressure below 120/80 mm Hg.

■ **Cholesterol.** Aim to keep your LDL (bad) cholesterol below 100 mg/dL, your HDL (good) cholesterol above 40 mg/dL for men and above 50 mg/dL for women, and your triglycerides below 150 mg/dL.

Ask your doctor what to do to keep your numbers in a healthy range.



Community Health Plan
137 N. Belt Highway
St. Joseph, MO 64506

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Tacoma, WA
Permit No. 1066



walking

FUN, EASY AND GOOD FOR THE HEART



HOW OFTEN DO YOU HEAR THAT there's no simple answer, no silver bullet or no magic potion?

Well, at least when it comes to heart health, there just might be the next best thing: walking.

Walking is an easy, inexpensive, do-anywhere, do-anytime physical activity that can help prevent cardiovascular disease, stroke and other health problems. And a brisk walk helps you feel good, energized and relaxed. Regular walkers often sleep better, burn more calories and maintain a healthier weight than nonwalkers.

It's easy to get started. Lace up a good pair of

shoes with sturdy heel supports, dress for the weather and pick out a safe place to walk. Do a little light stretching and you're good to go.

Walk slowly to warm up; then increase your speed. At the end of your walk, cool down for a few minutes by walking slowly again.

As you get used to exercising, gradually increase the pace, distance and duration of your walk. Try to walk at least three times a week.

If you haven't been physically active in a while, talk to your doctor before you get started with an exercise program.

Walking may improve your sleep and help you keep a healthy weight.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

HEALTHY. recipe

Simple and spicy Mexican corn

Whether you're after a side dish to spice up a Mexican-style meal or something hot to warm up a cool day, this recipe might be what you're looking for.

Ingredients

- 4 cups frozen corn
- ½ cup salsa or picante sauce, spiciness to taste
- 4 teaspoons lime juice

Instructions

1. Cook corn as usual in steam basket or microwave oven.
2. Drain corn if necessary and place in serving dish with salsa and lime juice.
3. Stir to combine well and serve. Makes four 1-cup servings.

Nutrition facts (per serving)	
Calories 166	Calories from fat 0
Percent Daily Value*	
Total fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 150mg	6%
Carbohydrate 36g	12%
Protein 5g	
Percent of calories from fat 0	

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet.
Source: American Institute for Cancer Research