



HEALTHY LIVING SECTION

Weekly tips and advice from your neighborhood Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge providers.



5 Things Your Heart's Telling You

These everyday signs can tell you a lot about your heart's health. Are you listening?

1 Heartbeat – Heart skipping a beat a little too often? It may be sending you an important message. Frequently feeling like your heart's beating too fast, too slow or in an unsteady rhythm could be a sign of an irregular heartbeat.

An irregular heartbeat, known as arrhythmia, happens when the electrical impulses that control your heartbeat fire abnormally. An irregular heartbeat is usually harmless, but some types can cause damage to your body or even be life threatening.

2 Heartburn – Feeling heartburn after a big meal? It's probably nothing to worry about. But if the pain spreads to your shoulders, arms, neck or jaw, it could be your heart's way of signaling an oncoming heart attack.

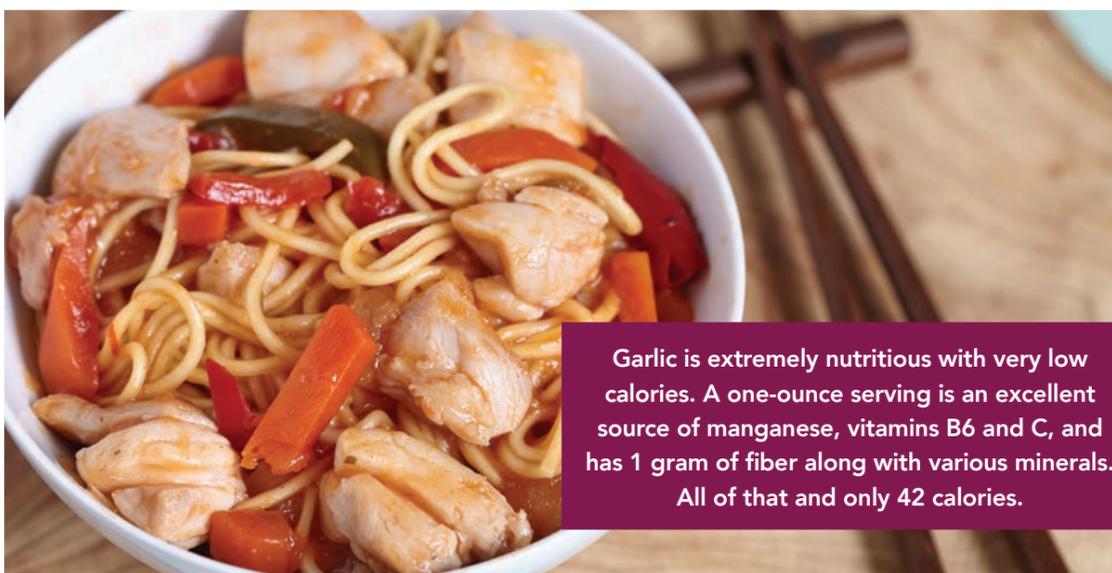
3 Sleep Habits – Snoring too loudly at night? If your loved one complains about your snoring, or notices that you gasp for breath throughout the night, you may have sleep apnea. The condition, which happens when you stop breathing for short periods while you sleep, is common. And distressingly, it's often linked to a host of heart problems, such as high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease.

The good news? You have a range of options to treat it – and get your heart health back on track.

4 Shortness of Breath – It's common to feel breathless when you're exerting yourself. But if you feel short of breath when you're sitting down, lying flat or sleeping, it could actually be a sign of heart failure. Heart failure doesn't mean your heart has failed or stopped working. It's a condition where your heart doesn't pump blood as well as it should.

5 Chest Pain – Feeling pain, tightness or pressure in your chest? A common heart health warning sign, it could signal a blocked artery or an impending heart attack.

If the feeling is fleeting or the pain gets worse when you press on your chest, it might not be a heart attack. But if it lasts more than a few minutes – or you're in any doubt at all – call 911.



Garlic is extremely nutritious with very low calories. A one-ounce serving is an excellent source of manganese, vitamins B6 and C, and has 1 gram of fiber along with various minerals. All of that and only 42 calories.

Szechuan Chicken Noodle Toss

- 4 quarts water
- 6 ounces uncooked thin spaghetti
- 1 package (16 ounces) frozen stir-fry vegetable blend
- 1 tablespoon reduced-fat butter
- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 2-inch strips
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1/3 cup stir-fry sauce
- 3 green onions, chopped

In a Dutch oven, bring water to a boil. Add spaghetti and cook for 4 minutes. Add vegetables and cook 3 to 4 minutes longer or until spaghetti and vegetables are tender. Drain. Toss with butter and set aside, but keep warm.

In a nonstick skillet, stir fry the chicken, garlic and red pepper flakes in oil until chicken is no longer pink. Add stir-fry sauce and heat through. Add onions and spaghetti mixture, then toss to coat. **Serves: 4**



Managing Holiday Stress

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The holidays can be a stressful time of the year. You could try to avoid them altogether, but that might be even more stressful and certainly not as much fun. Instead, make the best of these days, participate as much as you feel comfortable and embrace the entertaining and healthy side of the holidays. Here are a handful of tips to help you on your merry way.

Make a list. No, this doesn't have anything to do with who has been naughty or nice; it's more of a plan on how you will approach staying healthy this season. On the list, include any goals you have, a schedule of planned activities and purchases you need to make. By creating a plan, you can lessen the stress of trying to figure things out later and minimize the risk of spreading yourself too thin.

It's all about good party choices. This includes both which parties you will attend and how you can enjoy them in a way that is healthy. First, remember that time is a luxury and you only have so much of it, so don't give away more of it than you want by accepting every party invitation you receive. It's OK to say no. Only attend the parties that you really want to. If you aren't sure about one, either pass or commit to a short visit just long enough to say hi and briefly catch up.

Regarding food and drink. It is way too easy to pack on the pounds during the holidays. Make good choices and avoid sweets or limit yourself to only one or two cookies. Skip the fat-laden eggnog and overly sweetened drinks for a glass of wine or a club soda with lime.

The extra steps will help. Incorporate exercise into your holiday activities by scheduling 30 minutes a day for fitness. If you're going to the mall for holiday shopping, consider taking a lap before starting or park at the opposite end of the mall where you plan on spending the most time. It doesn't have to be overly complicated, so feel free to get creative with your exercise.

You got through it. Now what? Continuing and improving the healthy choices you made during the holidays are important. You are well on your way to creating good habits, so keep that momentum going by adding 10 minutes or a few extra reps to your workout. It might also be helpful to create a new and improved plan on how you will stay healthy for the next few months.

Your stress levels don't have to rise to all new highs this holiday season. Commit to being healthy by planning, making good choices and maintaining your progress throughout the year. If you have any questions or would like more tips, please call us at 828-580-4230.

