



HEALTHY LIVING SECTION

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

10 Simple Tips for Better Heart Health!

- 1 I Like to Move It, Move It.** Regular exercise controls your weight, boosts your energy and combats conditions such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, depression and arthritis.
- 2 "Hi, Mom and Dad! No, I don't want any money!"** Keeping in touch with family and friends regularly boosts your psychological well-being, combats depression and loneliness, and solidifies your support system to help you cope when difficult life events may arise.
- 3 Veg Out.** Eating vegetables and fruits as part of an overall healthy diet may reduce your risk for heart disease, including heart attack and stroke.
- 4 Ohmmmmmm.** Meditation improves concentration and induces relaxation, which lowers blood pressure. Take a few moments at the start or end of your day to meditate in a quiet area.
- 5 Use Your Vacation Days.** Vacation allows you to recharge your batteries, spend time with loved ones, let go of stress and improve your mental health.
- 6 Zzzzzzzzz.** Forty percent of Americans are sleep deprived. Heart disease, diabetes and obesity have all been linked with chronic sleep loss. For good health, be sure you're getting between seven and nine hours of sleep each night.
- 7 Make It Yourself.** Cooking at home allows you to control what you put in your food, avoids hidden fat/salt/sugar, and saves money.
- 8 NaCL You Later!** Cut sodium from your diet. You'll lower your blood pressure and your risk of heart disease, heart attack and stroke. Use fresh, whole and natural foods in your cooking and use spices like basil, oregano or dill for flavor.
- 9 What happens to a frog's car when it breaks down? It gets toad away!** Laughter lowers blood pressure, reduces stress, improves heart health and produces a general sense of well-being. C'mon. You know that joke was funny.
- 10 Quit smoking.** No, really, quit smoking. It's bad for you and you know it. Get help from your doctor if you need it.



Chicken Zucchini Lo Mein

Zucchini is an excellent source of vitamin C, which helps protect your cells against free radical damage.

- 4 medium zucchini
- 1 1/2 pounds skinless, boneless, thinly sliced chicken breast (cut into 1-inch strips)
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder (divided)
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper (divided)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt (divided)
- 1 (14.4-ounce) bag frozen broccoli stir-fry vegetables, thawed
- 3 teaspoons canola oil (divided)
- 2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon corn starch
- 1/4 teaspoons red hot chile flakes (optional)
- 1/2 cup chopped green onion
- 2 cups fresh bean sprouts
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sesame seeds

Shred the zucchini with a box grater and place in a large bowl; set aside. Place the chicken lengthwise onto a cutting board and cut into 1-inch strips. Add to a different bowl and season with 1 teaspoon garlic powder, 1 teaspoon ginger, 1/8 teaspoon black pepper and 1/8 teaspoon salt. Warm a large nonstick pan or wok with 1 teaspoon oil over high heat. Add chicken, stirring frequently until fully cooked, about 5 to 7 minutes. Remove from heat, transfer chicken to a plate and cover with foil to keep warm. Warm another teaspoon of oil in the pan over high heat. Add the thawed stir-fry vegetables, stirring constantly until the vegetables are cooked and all the water has evaporated, around 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat and transfer to a bowl to reserve.

Make the Sauce: In a small bowl, add soy sauce, chicken broth, corn starch, 1 teaspoon garlic powder, 1 teaspoon ginger, 1/8 teaspoon black pepper, 1/8 teaspoon salt and (optional) chile flakes. Stir together with a fork until corn starch is dissolved. Also, chop the green onions.

Warm one more teaspoon of oil in the pan over high heat. Add half the zucchini, using tongs to stir constantly until zucchini starts to wilt, about 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the remaining zucchini along with the sauce and cook until the sauce is absorbed and all the zucchini is tender, about 2 minutes. Quickly stir in reserved chicken and vegetables. Cook another minute. Remove from heat and add bean sprouts, green onions and sesame seeds. **Serves: 4**



Giving Hands

The Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge Volunteers recently took things a step further and graciously donated funds to the Blue Ridge HealthCare Foundation to develop a scholarship endowment. Though the endowment has just been formed, the volunteers have financed the scholarships for many years. The purpose of the endowment is to afford many, many years of scholarships for those eligible, says Susan Pollpeter, director of Volunteer Services. The Foundation will house the endowment and anyone can donate to the fund to help it grow.

- For more information about the scholarship, such as eligibility and applications, visit www.BlueRidgeHealth.org.
- If you wish to donate to the endowment, please visit www.BRHCFoundation.org.



Keep a Healthy Heart

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Living a heart-healthy lifestyle sounds simple: exercise, eat healthy and avoid bad behaviors and you're all set. The truth is that there are so many other factors at play that it can be difficult to navigate those waters. However, everything can be made a little bit easier by taking a closer look at some of the common aspects (exercise, alcohol, diet and stress) of everyday life and how they affect your heart.

Exercise: The heart is a muscle and like other muscles, it gets stronger with exercise. A strong heart means it can pump more blood per beat and continue working at maximum level, if needed, with less strain. Exercise can also help improve cholesterol and fat levels, reduce inflammation in arteries, promote weight loss, and keep blood vessels flexible and open.

Alcohol: You have probably read articles about how moderate alcohol consumption can have a positive impact on your health. This is partially true, because alcohol can temporarily raise good (HDL) cholesterol, reduce blood clotting (can be good or bad) and it can improve inflammation. The truth is that all the good that can come from modest alcohol consumption can be gained to a greater effect through exercise and eating healthy. Also, there is a very fine line between alcohol being a positive and it becoming unhealthy. Don't feel bad about enjoying a glass of wine or beer with dinner, but don't kid yourself and claim to be engaging in a healthy behavior.

Diet: Minimizing saturated fat and sodium intake can do wonders for keeping your heart healthy. Saturated fat leads to plaque and clogs in your arteries and too much sodium causes your body to retain fluids, which can add stress to your heart. Choose lean protein options, such as chicken and legumes, and choose whole grain versions of carbohydrates to increase your fiber consumption.

Stress: More research is needed to determine the direct effect stress can have on your heart, but it is known that stress can lead to certain unhealthy behaviors that can wreak havoc on your heart. Stress often causes us to make bad choices, such as eating fatty comfort foods, overeating, smoking, excessive drinking and long periods of inactivity. Try staying positive, meditating, exercising and other healthy activities that work for you to manage stress. Your heart will thank you.

The way many of us live our lives, it seems like we enjoy making our hearts work harder than need be. Do yourself and your heart a favor by making an effort to cut out some of the bad, while adding in more of the good. If you currently have heart problems, consult with your doctor before beginning a new diet or exercise plan. If you have any questions, please call us at 828-580-4230.

