



From the Food Bank Kitchen

The Food Bank
of Western Massachusetts

Is it too late for Good Health?

In a recent article of Harvard Women's Health Watch, the question was asked "can you make up for years of poor eating?" This is a complicated question, but there has been research showing that healthy lifestyle adaptations at any age can significantly improve your health. While reversal of clogged arteries might only happen with a drastic lifestyle change, prevention of chronic diseases is still possible at any age.

Some Healthy Guidelines to Follow:

Watch what you eat: Choose a diet high in vegetables, healthy fat, nuts, and lean proteins.

Lower cholesterol: Know your numbers including if your cholesterol is too high. If it is, reduce your intake of high fat products such as red meats and processed foods.

Control your blood pressure: Recently the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association changed their guidelines about blood pressure, lowering what is considered high blood pressure. What this means for the average American is while you may not need to go on medication for blood pressure under 140/90, it is important to stay physically active and aware of lifestyle changes that may help lower blood pressure.

Consider aspirin therapy: Always talk to a doctor before starting any medications. Low-dose aspirin therapy has many benefits after a heart attack and stroke, and it may help prevent cardiovascular disease in adults ages 50-69 who have a 10% or greater risk of developing cardiovascular disease in the next 10 years.

What do to at age 20:

Find a doctor and have regular wellness exams. Talk to your primary care physician about heart healthy screenings, diet, lifestyle, checking cholesterol, heart rate, blood sugar, and BMI.

Be physically active. It is a lot easier to get active and stay active. Physical activity has been proven to improve heart health, lower risk of obesity, and also improve brain function.

Don't smoke. Long term exposure to smoke can increase the risk for lung cancer and heart disease.

What to do at age 30:

Help the family become heart healthy. Create heart healthy meals for the entire family, focusing on lean proteins and high fiber foods.

Get physically active as a family. Take family walks, or join the YMCA together and go once a week. Being physically active together can help children develop healthy patterns from a young age.

Know your family history. Having a relative with heart disease increases your risk, knowing this early can lead to better prevention and keeping your doctor informed.

Manage stress effectively. Long term stress can cause an increase in heart rate and blood pressure which can damage the arteries. Practice deep breathing exercises and self care.

What to do at age 40:

Watch your weight. The metabolism begins to slow down as we age, but weight gain can be avoided with a heart healthy diet and exercise.

Have your blood sugar checked. Have a fasting blood glucose test by age 45, this can serve as a baseline test which you then should have every 3 years. This test may be done earlier if you are overweight, diabetic, or prediabetic.

Pay attention to snoring. One in five adults has mild sleep apnea, which is a condition that causes pauses in breathing during sleep. Sleep apnea if left untreated can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.

What to do at age 50+:

Listen to your doctor. If you are on a treatment plan, stick to it. This may lower your risk of heart disease or stroke.

Continue to eat a healthy diet. It is important at all ages to eat healthy, try to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, fiber rich whole grains, fish, and meatless proteins.

Learn the signs of a heart attack and stroke. It is important to know the signs of a heart attack and a stroke because you will be more likely to get immediate help. Quick treatment can save your life.

After 60 have an ankle brachial index test, it can look for plaque build up in the arteries.



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Balsamic Chicken with Apple, Lentil, and Spinach Salad

Serves:6

Source: delish.com

- 3 Tbsp. olive oil
- 4 6oz. boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 2 scallions

- 1 green apple
- 1 stalk celery
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 can lentils, rinsed
- 2 C. baby spinach

Heat 1 Tbsp. oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Season the chicken with 1/2 tsp salt and pepper and cook until golden brown and cooked through, 8 to 10 minutes per side. Remove from the heat and add the vinegar. Turn the chicken to coat. Meanwhile in a large bowl, toss the scallions, apple, celery, lemon juice, remaining 2Tbsp oil, 1/2 tsp salt, and 1/2 tsp pepper. Fold in the lentils, and spinach. Serve with the chicken.

Nutritional Info: 471 Calories, 42 gm Carbohydrates, 12gm Total fat, 2 gm saturated fat, 51 gm Protein, 15 gm Fiber, 340 mg Sodium.

Heart Healthy Corn and Potato Chowder

Serves: 4

Source: womansday.com

- 12 oz. red potatoes, cut into 3/4 inch pieces
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 bulb fennel, cut into 1/4 inch pieces,
- 1 1/2 c. frozen corn
- 2 cloves garlic finely chopped
- 3 oz. chorizo, cut into 1/4 inch pieces

- 2 Tbsp. all purpose flour
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 c. low sodium chicken broth
- 6 sprigs thyme
- 1/2 c. low fat milk

In a medium pan, cook half the chorizo according to packaging instructions. In a 5-6 quart slow cooker, toss the potatoes, onion, fennel, corn, garlic, and half the chorizo with the flour and 1/2 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Stir in the chicken broth and thyme, and cook covered until the potatoes are tender, about 5 hours on low or 4 1/2 hours on high. Ten minutes before serving, cook the remaining chorizo in a skillet over medium high heat, tossing occasionally until browned and crisp, around 3-4 minutes. Discard the thyme sprigs from the chowder, then stir in the milk. Sprinkle the crispy chorizo over the top and serve.

Nutritional Info: 388 Calories, 40 g Carbohydrates, 14g Total fat, 4g Saturated fat, 18g Protein, 5g Fiber, 530 mg Sodium, 9 g Sugar

Squash and Spinach Lasagna

Serves: 8

Source: foodnetwork.com

- 9 no-boil lasagna noodles
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 cups low-fat milk

- 1/4 C. cornstarch
- 10oz. baby spinach
- 1/2 C. flat leaf parsley leaves, chopped
- 1 butternut squash, peeled seeded, halved, cut into 1/4 inch thick slices
- 2 cups low fat shredded mozzarella

Preheat the oven to 400° F. Soak the lasagna noodles in warm water. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic, onions and salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender and browned, about 10 minutes. If the mixture becomes too dry, add a tablespoon or two of water. Meanwhile, stir together 1/2 cup of the milk and the cornstarch in a small bowl until smooth. Heat the remaining 3 1/2 cups milk in a large saucepan until bubbling. Stir the cornstarch mixture into the milk and bring to a boil. Simmer, stirring, until the milk thickens to the consistency of a thin batter, about 5 minutes. Stir in the onion mixture, spinach, parsley and nutmeg, and cook until the spinach wilts. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from the heat. Drain the noodles. Spread 1 cup of the spinach mixture over the bottom of a 13- by 9- by 2-inch glass or ceramic baking dish. Arrange 3 lasagna noodles over the spinach. Arrange half of the squash over the noodles, overlapping slightly, and sprinkle with one-third of the mozzarella. Spoon 1 cup spinach mixture over the cheese, and top with 3 noodles, the remaining squash and another third of the mozzarella. Top with 1 cup spinach mixture, followed by the last 3 noodles and the remaining 1 cup spinach mixture. Cover tightly with foil; reserve the remaining mozzarella. Bake for 40 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle the remaining mozzarella over the top. Bake until bubbling and the squash is tender, about 15 minutes. Let stand at least 10 minutes before serving.

Nutritional Info: 335 Calories, 41g Carbohydrates, 10g Total fat, 5g Saturated fat, 17g Protein, 6g Fiber, 640mg Sodium, 10g Sugar