

# February

## Celebrate American Heart Month

### February is American Heart Month

Heart disease is the #1 cause of death in the United States. The objective of this month is to bring awareness about heart-related illness and to decrease the number of people who may have a heart-related illness.

The American Heart Association's goal has remained the same since 1948 – to reduce cardiovascular disease by 25% by the following: decrease the growing obesity trend, reduce untreated high blood pressure, encourage people to start exercising, stop smoking and take the steps necessary to reduce their cholesterol.

Heart disease is the third-leading cause of death for women ages 25 to 44, the second-leading cause of death for women ages 45 to 64, and it is the first leading cause of death for American women greater than 65 years old. Men and women share some common risk factors such as increasing age, heredity, tobacco smoke, high blood cholesterol and blood pressure, physical inactivity, obesity and diabetes mellitus. Interestingly, there are some risk factors that play a bigger role in the development of heart disease in women than in men.

### A Little DASH will do

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, or DASH diet eating plan, is recommended by physicians for people with hypertension (high blood pressure) or pre-hypertension. In addition to being a low-sodium eating plan, the DASH diet is a plan rich in fruits and vegetables and low- or non-fat dairy and limited amounts of fats and sugars.

There are additional benefits of the DASH eating plan other than lowering blood pressure, which includes reducing the risk stroke, heart disease and developing kidney stones.

A natural combination of calcium, potassium and magnesium (found in foods included in the DASH diet such as those listed below) has shown to have the best effect in lowering blood pressure

**Calcium:** low-fat dairy products

**Potassium:** bananas, dates, potatoes, apricots, tomatoes and low-fat dairy products.

**Magnesium:** whole grains, nuts, legumes and beans

**Bottom Line:** Simply adding more fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy and whole grains to your current diet will help lower your sodium levels.

### Risk Factors:

- Metabolic syndrome: a combination of high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high triglycerides and fat around your abdomen
- Mental stress and/or depression
- Smoking
- Post-menopausal women: Low levels of estrogen increases the chance of developing (CVD) coronary vascular disease in the smaller blood vessels

### Simple lifestyle changes may reduce your risk of heart disease:

- Work to achieve and then maintain a healthy weight
- Quit or do not start smoking
- Exercise 30-60 minutes a day on most days of the week
- Eat a diet low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium

For more information visit [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

### Move of the Month: Walking Towards a Healthier You!

Research has shown that the benefits of walking and moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day can help you:

- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease
- Improve blood pressure and blood sugar levels
- Lower the risk of obesity and help maintain body weight
- Release endorphins and enhance mental well being
- Reduce your stress level and increase your energy
- Reduce the risk of osteoporosis
- Reduce the risk of breast and colon cancer



### Recipe of the Month: Strawberry Breakfast Sandwich

A strawberry breakfast sandwich sounds strange, but it sure doesn't taste strange! English muffins topped with cheese, honey and strawberries make a delicious start to the day. Pair the sandwich with a green salad and serve with milk for a light lunch or simple supper.

#### Ingredients

8 ounces Neufchatel cheese or low-fat cream cheese, softened 4 Whole Wheat English muffins, split and toasted  
1 tablespoon Honey 2 cups (about 10 ounces) sliced strawberries  
1 teaspoon Grated lemon zest

**Directions:** In food processor, process cheese, honey and zest until well mixed, or mix in bowl with wooden spoon. Spread 1 tablespoon cheese mixture on cut side of 1 muffin half; top with one-quarter cup strawberries. Repeat with remaining ingredients to make 8 open-faced sandwiches.

