

The Wellness Exchange



A Publication of
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Focus on Building Healthy Relationships



For many of us, our relationship with our significant other is the most important relationships in our lives. Here are tips for staying close to one another:

Listen

Truly listening can reduce conflict, boost trust, and lead to a more satisfying partnership. But listening is more than just being in the same room with your partner. Show you care by turning off the TV, making eye contact, and giving your undivided attention. Be sure to reflect back to your mate what you are hearing. This is particularly important when your partner is upset. If you listen carefully, you are more likely to understand the problem and find a way to help.

Focus on the Positives

As time goes on, you may start to take for granted the qualities in your partner

that initially attracted you, and focus instead on the things your partner does that bother you. It's essential to make a conscious effort to focus on the positive attributes in your partner.

Stop Nagging

Instead, have a dialogue with your partner. And remember to balance criticisms with a heavy dose of positive feedback. When you make a request that might be viewed as nagging, start off by expressing how much you appreciate your partner's positive qualities.

Spend More Time Together

Putting "couple time" on your calendar underscores the priority you place on carving out alone time for the two of you. Don't let your time together be dictated by the calendar, though. Be sure to enjoy each other's company for at least a few minutes every day, talking about positive things.



Valentine's Day Trivia

You probably already know that February 14th is Valentine's Day. But did you know that...

- ♥ Valentine's Day is celebrated in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, France, and England.
- ♥ Each year, an estimated 1 billion valentine cards are sent, which makes Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year.
- ♥ Almost 60 percent of all Valentine's Day cards are purchased within six days of the holiday.
- ♥ Hand-made valentines were exchanged in America as early as the 1700s.
- ♥ The first commercial valentines were produced and sold in the 1840's. These cards were made by Esther A. Howland, who used lace, ribbons, and cut-out pictures to create her valentines.

Touch

Physical communication is just as important as emotional communication; it relieves tension and shows your partner that you care.

Keep Connections Strong

Good relationships are essential to our happiness and emotional health. In fact, our relationships can affect our physical health as well. Studies have shown that relationships have a positive impact on heart health and many other health issues.

It's not always easy to keep friendships and family connections strong with so many demands for your time, including work, and children.

Keep your relationships healthy even during busy times by:

~Visiting with friends and family. Or, if you're unable to make the trip, take the time to make a phone call, send an email, or write a quick note to let them know you're thinking about them.

~Making new friends. Spending time with people who have lifestyles similar to your own may help you feel that someone understands the challenges you face.

If you feel too exhausted to talk to or relate with the people important to you, just be sure to tell them. Explaining your feelings to them will help you both feel better.

If you find yourself wanting to isolate, or feeling exhausted for a prolonged period, you may want to consult with a professional counselor.



Act in Time

When a Heart Attack Strikes

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February is American Heart Month, a great time of the year to learn more information about one of America's most prevalent diseases.

What Happens

During a Heart Attack?

The arteries in the heart provide the heart with the blood supply required for nourishment. Coronary artery disease causes the arteries to become narrow, and blood can't flow as well as it should. Fat, calcium, proteins and other cells build up inside the arteries, forming plaques, which are hard on the outside and soft on the inside.

Blood clots form around the artery when the plaque's hard outer shell cracks. If a blood clot completely blocks the artery, the heart isn't able to receive oxygen, and heart muscle cells die, causing permanent damage. This is called a myocardial infarction (MI), or heart attack.

Each coronary artery supplies blood to a different region of heart. The damage to the heart depends on the size of the area and the time between injury and treatment.

The heart starts healing soon after a heart attack, and can continue to heal for about eight weeks. However, the scar tissue that's formed following a heart attack isn't able to contract or pump as well as before the heart attack.

What Do I Do if I Have a Heart Attack?

At the first signs of a heart attack, call 911. The best time to treat a heart attack is within one to two hours of the first symptoms. More damage is done to the heart and there is a lower chance for survival, the longer the wait between symptoms and treatment. Please remember that discomfort can be felt in many ways. It can happen in the chest,

Symptoms of a Heart Attack

Heart disease and heart attacks kill more American women than men each year, and pose a greater threat to American women than all forms of cancer combined. Unfortunately, many women do not know that the heart attack symptoms in women can be significantly different from those in men.

Classic Symptoms (occur in both men and women)

- ♥ Squeezing chest pain or pressure
- ♥ Shortness of breath
- ♥ Sweating
- ♥ Tightness in chest
- ♥ Pain spreading to shoulders, neck or arm
- ♥ Feeling of heartburn or indigestion with or without nausea and vomiting
- ♥ Sudden dizziness or brief loss of consciousness

Symptoms More Likely in Women

- ♥ Indigestion or gas-like pain
- ♥ Dizziness, nausea or vomiting
- ♥ Unexplained weakness, fatigue
- ♥ Discomfort/pain between shoulder blades
- ♥ Recurring chest discomfort
- ♥ Sense of impending doom

arms, back or jaw. If you have symptoms, **take notice and seek medical care immediately.**

How Are Future Heart Attacks Prevented?

After a heart attack, the goal should be to keep your heart healthy and reduce your risks of having another heart attack. You can achieve this goal by taking your medications, changing your lifestyle, and seeing your doctor for regular heart checkups.

Take Your Medications

Medications are prescribed after a heart attack to prevent future blood clots, improve your heart's performance, lower your heart's workload, and prevent plaques by lowering your cholesterol. It is important to know the medication's name, what it's used for, and when to take each dose. Keep a list of your medications and ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.



Lifestyle Changes

There is no cure for coronary artery disease, but you can slow or prevent the disease from progressing further by following your doctor's advice and making the following lifestyle changes.

- ♥ Stop smoking
- ♥ Follow your physician's recommended exercise plan
- ♥ Maintain an ideal body weight
- ♥ Control stress.

See Your Doctor

Your doctor will probably ask you to make an appointment for four to six weeks after you leave the hospital to check the progress of your recovery. Call your doctor sooner if you have symptoms such as chest pain that becomes more frequent, increases in intensity, lasts longer, or spreads to other areas, shortness of breath, dizziness, or irregular heartbeats. For more information on heart attacks, click on this link: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/actintime/>

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Please note that the information contained herein should not be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition, and is provided for your information only.

4 Surprising Heart-Healthy Foods

Tea (black, green, white, and oolong)
Studies suggest that drinking three cups each day can reduce your risk of heart disease.

Dark Chocolate (as opposed to milk or white chocolate)
Studies have shown that small portions of dark chocolate can improve blood vessel flow, and may help reduce high blood pressure.

Fatty Fish

Coldwater fatty fish, such as salmon, trout, herring, tuna, sardines, and mackerel, are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which lower blood cholesterol, preventing blood clots and heart attacks.

Avocados

Avocados are full of heart-healthy, monounsaturated fat, which helps lower both total cholesterol and "bad" cholesterol.

Remember that even with healthy foods, **portion size matters!**