

# NUTRIGRAM

February 2006

## Be Good to Your Heart

This Valentine's Day, when you see all of the pink and red hearts take a moment to think about the one beating inside your own body. The American Heart Association says there are four major steps that can make a difference in helping to keep your heart healthy:

### 1. Stay away from cigarettes and tobacco smoke.

You probably know that tobacco smoke contributes to lung cancer and other diseases, but you may not know that it also can damage blood vessels. Studies show that smokers are more than twice as likely to have a heart attack or stroke as nonsmokers. Even secondhand smoke can increase the risk of heart attack by 30 percent. The message is clear: "If you smoke, quit now. And if you don't smoke, don't start."

### 2. Watch cholesterol intake.

Cholesterol is a fatty substance, made by the liver, which coats cells to protect them. But it can also be dangerous when too much of it builds up in the bloodstream. This can happen when the diet contains too many fat and cholesterol-rich foods (meat, butter, whole milk, cream, ice cream, cheese, eggs). If too much cholesterol circulates, it will be deposited in arteries, building a wall of plaque inside the blood vessels. By eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables (foods from plants do not contain cholesterol) and cutting down on fatty foods, especially foods high in saturated fats, you can help keep your arteries clean of plaque. Cholesterol levels in the blood are measured by a simple blood test. If levels are too high, a low-saturated-fat, low-cholesterol diet usually is recommended.

### 3. Keep blood pressure in check.

High blood pressure has earned the name "silent killer" because it causes no symptoms, yet is a major cause of heart and blood vessel diseases, especially heart attacks and strokes. Blood pressure is the force or pressure exerted by the heart in pumping blood. High blood pressure is a warning that the heart is working harder than normal in pumping blood and extra fluid through your body. But if untreated, it will increase the heart's workload. Even children can have high blood pressure. But exercise, choosing low-salt foods (salt can raise blood pressure in some people), and controlling your weight can keep blood pressure in check. Sometimes drugs are needed to control high blood pressure in teenagers, and even in children.

### 4. Stay physically active.

Studies show that people who have spent their lives being active will be less likely to die from a heart attack. The American Heart Association says just 30 - 60 minutes of moderate exercise most, if not all days of the week can be enough to keep you and your heart fit. But make sure the exercise you choose is something you will enjoy so it can become a habit. Some people like group sports, such as soccer or baseball. Others prefer solo activities like bicycling, swimming, jogging, or jumping rope. Remember, the patterns you set early in life—what foods you choose, how active you are—will often stick with you for life.



### Monthly SUPERFOODS Promotion

**NUTS**  
...more than a tasty snack

fiber  
vitamin E  
isoflavones  
flavonoids  
go nuts!  
Omega-3 fatty acids  
plant protein  
SUPERFOODS

Almonds, walnuts, pecans and others are packed with OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS, PHYTOCHEMICALS and ANTIOXIDANTS. Substituting a handful of nuts for saturated fat in your diet may help reduce your risk of heart disease and may even help you lose weight! The good news in a nutshell... adding almonds, pecans and walnuts to recipes gives you flavor and NUTRITION in every crunchy bite.