

Heart Healthy Habits

This is the third and final article in the 3-part series on heart healthy habits guided by the **American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8** recommendations. The first article addressed being physically active, along with controlling high blood pressure and blood sugar. Last month the information was on stopping smoking. This month we will review quality sleep and reducing stress as heart healthy habits. Talk with your DCL dietitian to learn more about the **American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8** recommendations for a healthy diet, healthy weight, and lipid (e.g. cholesterol, triglyceride, HDL, & LDL) management.



Quality Sleep

The age-old adage of getting a good night's sleep still holds a lot of merit when it comes to a healthier you! Quality sleep includes regular, restful sleep that is important to keeping the brain and body functioning at their maximum. Quality sleep can influence our eating habits, that is the foods we choose to eat, how we feel overall, the general state of our memory and recall, and our overall well-being.

Benefits of Quality Sleep

Studies show that getting an average of 7-9 hours of sleep each night is an essential part of overall health, including heart health, and well-being.



Quality sleep is a vital part of

- thinking clearly and the ability to concentrate
- improving mood, mental alertness & sharpness, in general, and with learning new things having more energy
- building a stronger immune system
- aiding with healing and repairing cells and tissues within the body, including blood vessels
- reducing the risk of developing chronic disease or controlling or improving chronic conditions, like high blood pressure (i.e. hypertension), high blood sugar (i.e. hyperglycemia), and cholesterol (e.g. hyperlipidemia), and, controlling weight, or maintaining a healthy weight.

Healthy sleep habits, AKA sleep hygiene, are important to achieving quality sleep. See the attachment to read about good sleep habits.

Managing Stress



Managing the stress in our lives can help with maintaining or improving our physical and mental health, and overall well-being. We all respond to stress in different ways. How we react to stress may positively or negatively impact our mental and physical health. Stress may be linked to poor health behaviors that can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Eustress

Stress can be good (i.e. eustress) like starting a new job, moving into a new place, or getting married. Positive effects of stress on our mental health include feeling happy, optimistic, grateful, and having a sense of purpose and satisfaction with life. Positive mental health has been associated with decreasing the risk of developing heart disease by lowering (1) blood pressure, (2) blood sugar, and (3) cholesterol levels, all which reduce

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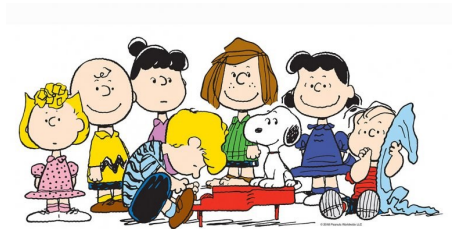
Distress

Stress can also be bad (i.e. distress) like when faced with daily or ongoing challenges. Negative effects of stress on our mental health include feeling burned out, depressed, anxious, angry, pessimistic, and having a sense of dissatisfaction with life. Negative mental health has been associated with (1) irregular heart rate and rhythm, (2) increased digestive or gut problems, and (3) increased blood pressure, all which may cause inflammation throughout the body that can be harmful to heart health and general well-being over time.

Steps to Manage Stress

Fortunately, there are steps to take to help manage stress. Some of these steps will sound familiar as they have been part of action steps in the previous two articles covering the **American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8**. Steps to reduce stress include

- being physically active daily like taking a walk, doing (chair) yoga or other (chair) exercises, doing yardwork, dancing, etc., the list is endless
- spending time with family and/or friends to maintain social connections
- getting quality sleep by aiming for 7-9 hours each night
- maintaining a positive attitude; think about starting a gratitude journal,
- practicing relaxation by listening to music, and/or meditating, sitting on the porch and observing nature
- engaging in enjoyable hobbies, like cooking, knitting, photographing, bird watching, painting, and being in nature to name a few.



Hopefully you have found the 3-part series on heart healthy habits to be helpful. Ask your DCL team if you have questions about other ways to keep your heart and whole body healthy.

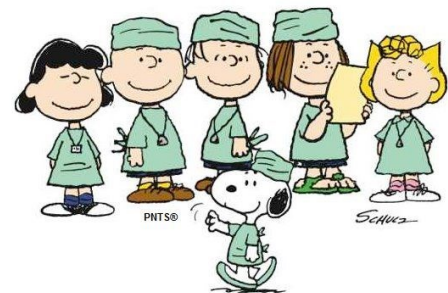
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Good Sleep Habits

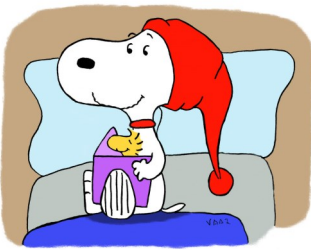
There are many different factors that might interrupt a good night's sleep. Practicing good sleep habits may help with having better quality of sleep. The following are simple sleeping habits to help with having a more restful sleep.

Make a restful sleeping room

- * Do the best to keep the room dark, cool, and quiet while sleeping. Use darkening shades and/or wear ear plugs or an eye mask if needed.
- * Use a white noise machine or meditation app to help with falling asleep.
- * Limit the time on electronic devices (cell phones, laptops, computer, & TV) before sleeping.



Sticking to a routine sleep schedule



- * Go to bed and get up at about the same time each day, if possible. Plan to get at least 7 hours of sleep, which is an average amount of sleep time for healthy adults.
- * Get out of bed and do something relaxing (reading, listening to relaxing music) if you cannot fall asleep. Return to bed when tired.
- * Limit napping time and avoid napping too close to bedtime.

Limit caffeine or other stimulants before going to bed

- * Drinking coffee, tea, or energy drinks too close to bedtime and smoking tobacco can interfere with falling asleep.
- * Chocolate contains energy-boosting ingredients like sugar and caffeine; in general, the darker the chocolate, the more caffeine it contains.

Note about physical activity

- * Being physically active routinely is a good way to help with sleeping, except when it is too close to bedtime, then it can make it harder to fall sleep. Allow for downtime to rest before going to bed.
- * Doing gentle yoga can be relaxing and help with falling asleep.
(Information comes from the DCL KCM Patient Handbook)



Committing to Care: Improving Your Health and Wellbeing

Dialysis is a life-saving treatment. Attending all of your scheduled dialysis appointments and staying for the full treatment session is important to feeling your best. Committing to dialysis can be tough, but it can improve your physical health and emotional well-being. Some days may be more difficult than others, but there are ways to handle even the worst days.

It is normal to experience many feelings when you think about attending treatments. You could experience a range of strong emotions. Recognizing your feelings can help you figure out what might keep you from going to your treatments. Your social worker can help you find ways to address these feelings and also talk through any obstacles that you may identify. Sharing your thoughts and feelings with your family, friends, and others in your support network can help as well.

In addition to identifying feelings about treatment attendance, there are a variety of reasons why people on dialysis may not be able to complete their treatments as prescribed, such as scheduling, finances, or feeling unwell. Knowing what to do when you experience these challenges can help you prioritize yourself and commit to your care. Talk with your care team to address these obstacles. By taking an active role in your care and prioritizing your health, you can feel more in control.

Here are a few tips to improve your health and well-being:

If you are not feeling well... Call your dialysis center and ask to speak with a nurse. Your nurse can talk to you about how you are feeling and whether you can attend a later treatment or complete your treatment on a different day. This can help decrease your risk of hospitalization. If you have any new or worsening medical symptoms, talk with your doctor about possible solutions.

If you are tired... Not completing your dialysis treatment can actually make you feel more tired. You will be carrying around extra fluid which is hard on your body, and you may also miss doses of medication that help with anemia. If you are feeling anxious, depressed, or are having trouble sleeping, talk to your social worker or doctor.

If you have a doctor's appointment... Schedule doctor's appointments around dialysis to ensure you receive your full dialysis prescription. Let your doctor's office know that you need to prioritize your dialysis treatments. If you have no other option, speak to your dialysis nurse as soon as possible about how you can complete your dialysis treatment.

If you do not have transportation... Your social worker can connect you with community resources. It's a good idea to have a back-up plan in case your regular transportation is not available. Can a family member, neighbor or friend offer a ride? Do you know about public transportation options or shared ride services? Your back-up plan can also help in bad weather. If you can't make it, call your center and reschedule your treatment as soon as possible.

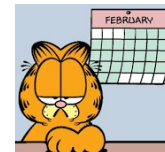




Committing to Care: Improving Your Health and Wellbeing

Here are a few tips to improve your health and well-being:

If your schedule does not work for you... Talk to your team about options to complete treatments from the comfort of your home. Let the staff know if you have commitments such as work or family obligations and need a different time or schedule.



If you have a concern about your care or care team... Let the center manager or administrator know. The facility has a process to investigate concerns and must inform you about the results of that investigation. The team wants you to feel comfortable about all aspects of your care.

If it's a holiday... Check the dialysis facility schedule and your transportation provider's availability. There may be a change during the holidays. You can feel your best for the holiday by making sure to attend treatment. If you are looking for more flexibility with your plans, talk to your care team about home dialysis options.



If you are feeling alone or sad... Your support system can listen and provide help when you feel overwhelmed. Build a stronger support system by connecting with professional organizations, asking your social worker to connect you with a dialysis peer mentor, joining a book or fitness club, or even volunteering. Talk with your social worker. They are trained to provide support through tough times.

Attending treatments and following your treatment plan helps you stay healthier longer. Partner with your care team to prioritize your health and be an active participant in your own wellness



Late Summer Seasonal Foods for a Low-Potassium Diet

As summer winds down, gardens and farmers' markets overflow with fresh produce. Late summer, especially in regions like Nebraska, offers a colorful array of fruits and vegetables that are not only delicious but can also be kidney-friendly when chosen wisely. For those following a **low-potassium diet**, understanding which seasonal foods are safe is key to enjoying the flavors of the season without compromising health.

Why Potassium Matters in Kidney Health

Potassium is a vital mineral that helps regulate heart function and muscle contractions. However, for individuals with chronic kidney disease (CKD), the kidneys may struggle to remove excess potassium from the blood. This can lead to hyperkalemia, a potentially dangerous condition. A low-potassium diet typically limits intake to 2,000mg per day, or less than 200 mg per serving of food

Low-Potassium Late Summer Produce

Here are some seasonal fruits and vegetables that are naturally low in potassium and safe for most renal

Fruits (per ½ cup or 1 small piece)

- Apples (1 medium) – 195 mg
- Applesauce (½ cup) – 85 mg
- Cranberries (½ cup dried) – 14 mg
- Blueberries (½ cup) – 77 mg
- Blackberries (½ cup) – 117 mg
- Cherries (½ cup) – 147 mg
- Peaches (½ cup canned or 1 small fresh) – 146 mg
- Plums (1 whole) – 104 mg
- Strawberries (½ cup) – 110 mg
- Watermelon (½ cup) – 67 mg



Vegetables (per ½ cup cooked or raw)

- Cabbage (1 cup raw) – 151 mg
- Cauliflower (½ cup raw) – 164 mg
- Zucchini (½ cup) – 147 mg
- Carrots (½ cup cooked) – 176 mg
- Cucumbers (½ cup) – 175 mg
- Eggplant (½ cup raw) – 94 mg
- Green beans (½ cup) – 131 mg
- Peppers (½ cup) – 157 mg



✓ Tips for Managing Potassium

- **Stick to ½ cup servings** of fruits and vegetables.
- **Boil or soak** high-potassium vegetables to reduce their content.
- **Avoid salt substitutes** that contain potassium chloride.
- **Read labels** on canned and packaged foods for hidden potassium additives.

Final Thoughts

Late summer is a wonderful time to enjoy fresh, local produce. With a little planning, you can savor the season's best flavors while keeping your potassium levels in check. Whether you're enjoying a crisp apple salad or a berry parfait, these foods can help you stay healthy and satisfied. Talk with our Registered Dietitian if you have any questions about your renal diet.




“An Apple a Day” Muffins

Ingredients

- 12 muffin papers
- 1-1/2 cups raw apple
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 1-1/2 cups all purpose white flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1-1/2 teaspoons cinnamon

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400° F and place muffin papers in muffin pan. peel and cut apple into small pieces.
2. Beat eggs in a large bowl. Add sugar, oil and water; mix well. Add vanilla.
3. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking soda and 1 teaspoon cinnamon.
4. Stir flour mixture into egg mixture. Batter will be lumpy. Fold in apple pieces.
5. Fill muffin cups 3/4 full. Mix remaining 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon with 1 teaspoon sugar. Sprinkle on top of muffins.
6. Bake for 20 minutes or until lightly browned



**Flu Shots
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DCL Clinic
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Reasons to get the Flu Vaccine:

- * Reduce Flu Illness
- * Reduce Severity of Illness
- * Protect Others Around you
- * Prevent other serious medical complications
- * Could save your life
- * The sooner you get a flu shot the better

