

MERRITT

Wellness

Committed to the Health of our Family

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Get the Preventive Medical Tests You Need

From thehealthcareblog.com

Screening tests can find diseases early, when they're easiest to treat. Talk to your doctor about which preventive medical tests you need to stay healthy.

Body Mass Index: Your body mass index, or BMI, is a measure of your body fat based on your height and weight. It is used to screen for obesity. You can find your BMI by visiting <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi>.

Cholesterol : Once you turn 35 (or once you turn 20 if you have risk factors like diabetes, history of heart disease, tobacco use, high blood pressure, or BMI of 30 or over), have your cholesterol checked regularly. High blood cholesterol is one of the major risk factors for heart disease.

Blood Pressure: Have your blood pressure checked every 2 years. High blood pressure increases your chance of getting heart or kidney disease and for having a stroke. If you have high blood pressure, you may need medication to control it.

Cardiovascular Disease: Beginning at age 45 and through age 79, ask your doctor if you should take aspirin every day to help lower your risk of a heart attack. How much aspirin you should take depends on your age, your health, and your lifestyle.

Colorectal Cancer: Beginning at age 50 and through age 75, get tested for colorectal cancer. You and your doctor can decide which test is best. How often you'll have the test depends on which test you choose. If you have a family history of colorectal cancer, you may need to be tested before you turn 50.

Other Cancers: Ask your doctor if you should be tested for prostate, lung, oral, skin, or other cancers.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases: Talk to your doctor to see whether you should be tested for gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, or other sexually transmitted diseases.

Depression: If you have felt "down" or hopeless during the past 2 weeks or you have had little interest in doing things you usually enjoy, talk to your doctor about depression. Depression is a treatable illness.

HIV: Your doctor may recommend screening for HIV if you:

- Had unprotected sex with multiple partners.
- Have used injected drugs.
- Pay for sex or have sex partners who do.
- Have past or current sex partners who are infected with HIV.
- Are being treated for sexually transmitted diseases.
- Had a blood transfusion between 1978 and 1985.

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm: If you are between the ages of 65 and 75 and have smoked 100 or more cigarettes in your lifetime, ask your doctor to screen you for an abdominal aortic aneurysm. This is an abnormally large or swollen blood vessel in your stomach that can burst without warning.

Diabetes: If your blood pressure is higher than 135/80, ask your doctor to test you for diabetes. Diabetes, or high blood sugar, can cause problems with your heart, eyes, feet, kidneys, nerves, and other body parts.

Tobacco Use: If you smoke or use tobacco, talk to your doctor about quitting. For tips on how to quit, go to <http://www.smokefree.gov> or call the National Quitline at 1-800-QUITNOW.

If you missed the deadline to register for one of the Biometric Screenings - don't worry, you can still earn points!

There are still a few slots left for the March 15th screening here at Merritt's offices. Contact Meg, Pam or Holly Moye to get registered.

We are here to help you get the 100 points, so please don't hesitate to ask for any help!

28-Day Heart Disease Prevention Plan



Preventing heart disease can be a matter of making the right choices for your heart and overall health. Learn how you can develop heart-smart habits in just a matter of weeks with Dr. Oz's prevention plan. From www.doctoroz.com

While generally thought of as a man's disease, more women die every year of heart disease than men.

The best protection against heart disease is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Poor diet, lack of exercise and years of bad lifestyle habits takes its toll on the heart. Click here to learn how to spot the not-so-common symptoms women experience. Identifying them could be the difference between life and death.

Heart disease can be prevented if you are willing to stop the assault and adopt a health lifestyle from this day forward. This simple 28-day plan holds some powerful changes you can make for your heart and you can start today.

Week 1: Eat for Your Heart

In addition to limiting your intake of high-fat foods and red meat, there are certain things you should also be adding to your diet. Focus on a plant-based diet loaded with fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes, as well as the following:

Sriracha Hot Chili Sauce: This Asian-style hot sauce consists of, among other tasty ingredients, garlic and red chili peppers. Allicin, the active compound in garlic, affects the nitric oxide system, thus helping to relax blood vessels, which can help reduce blood pressure. The capsaicin in chili peppers may also have these vasorelaxant properties, helping to reduce blood pressure by relaxing blood vessels as well.

Kidney Beans: These legumes are a good source of Omega-3 fatty acids, which help to reduce inflammation. Omega-3s reduce triglycerides, stabilize your heartbeat, make platelets "less sticky" and can even lower blood pressure. Omega-3s also boost levels of HDL (the good cholesterol) and help clear your arteries. Add kidney beans to soups and salads.

Sweet Potatoes: These root vegetables contain lutein, carotenoids and alpha carotene. All these antioxidants work to protect your heart. Swap white starches out for nutrient-rich sweet potatoes whenever you have the chance.

Week 2: Drink for Your Heart

Thinking outside the box when it comes to juice can be beneficial to your health. The following juices may not be in everyone's kitchen, but they are certainly worth trying. Both are available in grocery stores. For an even greater health boost, try making fresh juice at home.

Blackcurrant Juice: A recent study has found that blackcurrant juice may help lower the levels of inflammatory markers like C-reactive protein (CRP), which appears to be correlated to heart disease risk. The body produces CRP during the general process of inflammation. Therefore, CRP is a "marker" for inflammation, meaning its presence indicates an increased state of inflammation in the body. Drink 1 cup a day to lower these levels.

Beet Juice: The nitrate content of beet juice is the muscle behind its blood pressure lowering benefits. Studies have shown that drinking

1 cup a day can help to reduce high blood pressure.

Week 3: Call for Less Stress

Human contact is essential to good health. Bad day? Let it out. Good day? Even better. Interacting and reconnecting with people you care about can be beneficial to your emotional health. This will reduce stress on the your heart. Set aside social time and reach out to at least two people a week. Tip: Set an alarm on your phone, and call that friend or family member you've been meaning to catch up with.

Week 4: Shop for Your Heart at the Pharmacy

When you think about your local pharmacy, you may think of filling prescriptions or a place where you can buy last-minute gallons of milk when you're running low. But, if you look at it through a different lens, you'll see it can be a treasure trove of preventive tools and supplements, especially when it comes to your heart. There's everything from home blood pressure monitors to holistic heart health products like omega-3 supplements, Coq10 and low-dose aspirin.

Know Your Blood Pressure and Monitor It at Home

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is often called the Silent Killer because many people are not aware that their blood pressure is too high. One out of 3 adults in the US suffers from hypertension.

Research shows home blood pressure monitoring can be vital to reducing a patient's risk of stroke, heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure. In fact, internationally recognized organizations, such as The American Heart Association, recommend any patient with or at risk of hypertension should purchase a clinically validated home blood pressure monitor and regularly monitor their blood pressure at home. For more on understanding your blood pressure reading, click here.

Omega-3 Supplements: Omega-3 fatty acids are cholesterol-clearing good fats (monounsaturated). For years, research has demonstrated that omega-3 fatty acids help lower an individual's risk for heart attack, stroke and overall inflammation.

CoQ10: Coenzyme Q10 (also known as CoQ10) is a vitamin-like compound that aids in the production of the body's energy. That is because it is found primarily in our mitochondria – small cell structures that act as the powerhouse of a cell. The highest concentrations of CoQ10 are where we need the most energy – your heart, liver and kidneys. CoQ10's energy generation makes it vital to heart health, while its powerful antioxidant properties add yet another layer of protection in maintaining a healthy heart.

Baby Aspirin: It has been shown that baby aspirin can help prevent heart attacks and it can reduce the chance of stroke. Recent studies suggest an added benefit: Aspirin has been linked to the prevention of almost every cancer. Take 2 baby aspirin daily. Consult your doctor before starting a daily aspirin regimen.