



Cardiovascular Wellness Program Newsletter

Issue #5

February 2021

Comments from Linda

Ready or not, a new semester is here and we do plan to have a good one. I have already sent out information about some spring challenges with our program, some activities to get us moving, involved, and maybe a place for us to find some flow. Like everything we do, these challenges are just another choice of something to do with us and please do the ones that suit you. I really look forward to where they take us. I am hoping you do these at home whether we see you on Zoom or not.

And speaking of Zoom, our program continues in its virtual format. We have exercises sessions 4 days/week, nutrition sessions 2-3 times/month, mindfulness practices twice/month, and health discussions as often as we can. I am grateful to all of you who keep coming to these sessions because of course that is what makes them worthwhile. I am grateful for my colleagues who contribute so much to our teaching program. I too am optimistic that eventually we will return to Folsom Hall and meet in person and I am hopeful we will be in good shape when we get there.

See you soon.

Linda

(cute video link below to "Go With the Flow" from Disney movie)

Included in this Issue:

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Exercise Reminders;
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February is Heart Month



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGCqamPU8YE>



Best Diets of 2021

U.S. News has evaluated more than 40 diets to help you meet your unique goals. Here are the expert-reviewed best diet plans to help you improve your overall health:



PreventionForward

Javier López, MD
Medical Director, UC Davis
Cardiac Rehabilitation Program



Best Heart-Healthy Diets

- #1 DASH Diet (tie)
- #1 Mediterranean Diet (tie)
- #1 Ornish Diet (tie)

SEE FULL RANKINGS LIST »

Best Diabetes Diets

- #1 The Flexitarian Diet (tie)
- #1 Mediterranean Diet (tie)
- #3 DASH Diet (tie)
- #3 Mayo Clinic Diet (tie)
- #3 Vegan Diet (tie)

SEE FULL RANKINGS LIST »

US News and World Reports are well-known for ranking medical schools and hospitals, but I never knew they also rank diets. As you can see above, the Mediterranean diet was ranked #1 for Best Heart-Healthy and Best Diabetes Diets – both of which are conditions of interest in our community. Others that tied with the Mediterranean diet include DASH, Ornish and Flexitarian. While these may sound like a potpourri of confusing names, these diets have more in common than the names would suggest. They all emphasize nutrient-rich foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. Furthermore, these diets reduce the intake of processed foods, refined grains and added sugars which are so abundant in the standard American diet. In addition to helping lower blood glucose and blood pressure, all of these #1 diets have been found to improve blood cholesterol, which together contribute to the healthy-heart effect. I encourage you to read up on the report (<https://health.usnews.com/best-diet>) and look for the type of diet (among the #1 winners) that resonates most with you! Ask yourself what it would take to continue your journey towards eating as healthily as possible. During this heart month, I will review with you more about the similarities of these many diets. While eating healthily is not the only component to living a healthy life, it is a large factor that gives you creative license with a variety of flavors! I look forward to reviewing the medical literature with you, as well as exploring the recipes that make maintaining your health fun!

Exercise Reminders *from Linda Paumer*



I am encouraging you to all participate in our exercise & diet challenge that started Feb 1st. A big goal for this challenge to get you involved in your cardiovascular training activities and help you strive to get 30 minutes in most days of the week. Toward that end, I am including some descriptions of activity to help you figure out if you're getting enough.

Physical activity is any body movement that works your muscles and requires more energy than resting. Walking, running, dancing, swimming, yoga, and gardening are a few examples of physical activity. According to the Department of Health and Human Services' 2008 [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#) physical activity generally refers to movement that enhances health. Exercise is a type of physical activity that is planned and structured. Lifting weights, using equipment in the gym, and playing on a sports team are examples of exercise.

Cardiovascular activity, like as running, swimming, walking, bicycling, dancing, and doing jumping jacks, uses large muscle groups, specifically your arms and legs. In order to deliver oxygen to working muscles, your heart beats faster than usual. You also breathe harder. Over time, regular cardiovascular or aerobic activity makes your heart and lungs stronger, makes you able to work better and hence enhances health.

Other Types of Physical Activity

Other types of physical activity—strength training and stretching—benefit your body in other ways. Strengthening activities improve the strength, power, and endurance of your muscles and bones. Doing pushups and sit-ups, lifting weights, climbing stairs, and digging in the garden are examples of strengthening activities. Strengthening activities also can be aerobic, depending on whether they make your heart and lungs work harder than usual.

Stretching helps improve your flexibility and your ability to fully move your joints. Touching your toes, doing side stretches, and doing yoga exercises are examples of stretching.

Intensity of Cardiovascular Activity

How hard you have to work to do an activity can vary greatly. To do the same level of an activity, unfit people have to work harder than people who are more fit. Thus, what is light-intensity activity for one person may be moderate-intensity for another. Moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activities are better for your heart than light-intensity activities. However, even light-intensity activities are better than no activity at all.

Light-intensity activities are common daily activities that don't require much effort. Moderate-intensity activities make your heart, lungs, and muscles work harder than light-intensity activities do. On a scale of 0 to 10, moderate-intensity activity is 5-6 and produces noticeable increases in breathing and heart rate. A person doing moderate-intensity activity can talk but not sing. Vigorous-intensity activities make your heart, lungs, and muscles work even harder. On a scale of 0 to 10, vigorous-intensity activity is 7-9. A person doing vigorous-intensity activity can't say more than a few words without stopping for a breath.

Some examples of aerobic activities. Depending on your level of fitness, they can be light, moderate, or vigorous in intensity:

- Pushing a grocery cart around a store
- Gardening, such as digging or hoeing
- Walking, hiking, jogging, running
- Water aerobics or swimming laps
- Bicycling, skateboarding, rollerblading, and jumping rope
- Ballroom dancing and aerobic dancing
- Tennis, soccer, hockey, and basketball
- Circuit training—resistance routines in quick succession



<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/physical-activity-and-your-heart>

Whole Wheat Cranberry Applesauce Muffins

Recipe
Corner

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Tbs flaxseed meal
- 6 Tbs water
- ½ cup milk of choice
- 1 tsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 ¼ cups whole wheat flour
- 1 ¼ cups oats
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- 1 cup unsweetened applesauce
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ¾ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup cranberry sauce



DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a small bowl, combine water and flaxseed meal. Let sit ~ 5 minutes to gel.
3. In a small bowl or glass, mix milk and vinegar. Let sit ~1 minute.
4. In a large bowl combine flour, oats, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon.
5. In a medium bowl combine applesauce, sugar, flaxseed meal and milk. Make a well in dry ingredients and add applesauce mixture and dried cranberries. Stir until just moist.
6. Fill muffin cups ¾ full, adding a tsp of cranberry sauce in the middle of each cup.
7. Bake for 10 minutes, lower heat to 375 degrees and bake another 6-8 minutes, until toothpick inserted into center comes out clean.

Why I wear red for Go Red for Women day (February 5)

by Debbie Lucas, RD, CDE

When they told me I had aortic stenosis, I clearly let them know that it must be a mistake, I was a VEGAN!

When they told me I had a congenital aortic valve defect and would at some time in my future need a heart valve replacement, I let them know that my arteries were quite clear, I was a vegan AND a dietitian, so I would have no problem.

When they told me at the age of 60 that it was time for that replacement, I said it would be a piece of cake, maybe I would only take a few weeks off of work!

When they told me in the ICU that all went well in surgery, but that I coded in recovery because a vessel had occluded post-op and 'oh, yeah, by the way, now you have a one-way heart bypass', I said 'you have got to be kidding me – there must be some mistake!'

When Linda came to visit me in the hospital and I told her I was going easy on the pain meds because I didn't want to get constipated, she told me there are meds for that and to take the stupid pain meds – and I did! Thank you for that advice, Linda.

The point is, things don't always go as planned and I am thankful to be surrounded by people much smarter than I am who offered help and support through my procedure. My amazing husband, family, friends, co-workers, church friends and my faith were how I got through it.

When I finally got to go home after 7 days in the hospital I was scared, overwhelmed, in pain, and frustrated from all my restrictions. They don't tell you that you will be so swollen and full of fluids that your clothes won't fit, or that you will feel at your ugliest with stitches, scars, drains, and limited wardrobe, or that you won't really feel like eating anything, at a time when you need to maximize your nutrition to heal, or that you will get exhausted by just walking down to the end of the street, or that sometimes you will feel incredibly down because you don't think you will ever be 'normal' again.

What they do tell you is to go to Cardiac Rehab. One of the days that really turned my spirits around was when I went to Cardiac Rehab for assessment and orientation. It was so great to talk to someone who 'got it' about all I was going through and to be able to be monitored while I exercised – as I had such a fear that something would go wrong when I exercised (or for that matter, when I slept). It really did turn things around for me (as did getting the clearance to be able to drive and not hold that silly pillow at my chest all the time!).

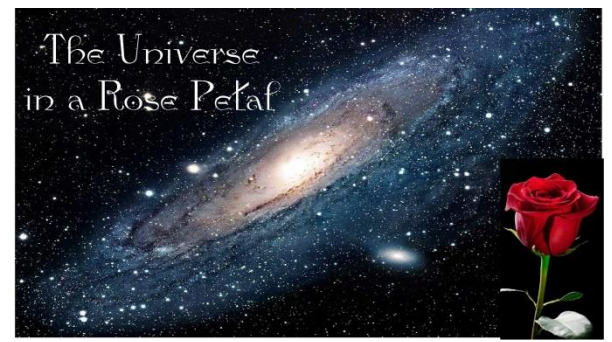
Unfortunately because of timing, I was back to work by the time I could get a regular spot in their gym, so never attended regularly.

I wear red because heart disease is the number one killer of Americans, both men and women. I wear red because every 36 seconds an American dies from heart disease. I wear red to increase awareness of the impact of heart disease. I wear red to remind everyone that a whole-food, plant-based diet is the best treatment for our heart and overall health. I wear red to encourage people to have a lifestyle that reduces risk which includes: regular exercise; achieving a health body weight; controlled hypertension, cholesterol and diabetes; no smoking; developing coping skills to manage stress; and staying connected to a community in which we are active, feel supported and have a sense of purpose. I am forever grateful to have that with the Cardiovascular Wellness Program and everyone who runs, teaches, helps out, volunteers and attends the program. I am thankful for you all and will wear red proudly!!!



Practicing Mindfulness

By Linda M, Larsen, RN-BC, RYT



After creating a regular place and time for beginning a sitting breath meditation practice as described in the December newsletter, today we'll dive into some more in-depth practice prompts and encourage you to consider why you want to meditate. Knowing your "Why" will help deepen your practice and motivate you to practice more consistently. Do you want reduced anxiety and depression, to feel more calm and relaxed, improved concentration, better sleep and/or a stronger immune system? Ironically, to achieve the benefits during daily mindful practice, you let go of any expectations, stop "doing" and "be" where you are in this moment, this breath. In his book *Full Catastrophe Living*, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D suggests these attitudes non-judging, patience, beginners mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance and letting go. In my mindfulness classes we go into further detail of each of these. I usually focus on one at a time, as research by Dr. Kabat-Zinn has found that working on one will lead to cultivating the other attitudes.

Once you have adopted a comfortable yet alert body posture, it's time to begin the breath practice itself. As you practice, try to maintain your original position: keeping the body still as possible helps bring about greater awareness and stills the mind. Consciously adopt the attitude of paying attention to the moment without trying to change anything. Take a deep breath through the nose, gently bringing the shoulders up to the ears as you inhale, feeling the air as it flows in and fills your chest and abdomen. Then, exhale out the mouth, releasing the shoulders down as you exhale, and repeat this cycle 3 to 4 times. Allow the breath to return to its natural pace, breathing through the nose.

There are various ways to allow the focus to remain on the breath: one is to *notice where you feel the breath most intensely*. Observe the sensation of breath at the nostrils, upper lip, through the nose, or through the back of the mouth and into throat. Or, perhaps the breath is more intense in the chest or belly as you feel the expansion when you breath in and the release as you breath out. You can also try *labeling the breath*, by saying in your own mind 'inhale' as you inhale and 'exhale' as you exhale. Another method is to *count the breath*: one cycle is one inhalation and one exhalation, so with each cycle's exhale count 1, and =count up to 5 or 10. If your mind wanders and you lose your focus, finding yourself at 15 or 22, simply start again at one. Notice that this is an opportunity to cultivate present moment awareness. Choose one or as many of the methods as you need to keep the focus on the breath. If you find the rhythm of breath changes – just allow it to be, however it is. If distractions arise – thoughts, images, sensations, pain, noises, simply return the focus to the breath and let the interruptions go, like a passing cloud. Have an attitude of compassion towards distractions; these are habits of the mind. Don't be concerned you were distracted, see if you can let go of the distraction and return the focus to the breath. I use a soft alarm sound from my phone to bring the time committed to non-doing to completion; find what works for you. Once the practice has ended, take a moment to notice how you are feeling. Simply note where your body and breath are right now – this present moment, when you are ready, open your eyes and return to every moment of your life as a practice of moment to moment awareness.

Note: It can be beneficial to have an audio recording with prompts—there are lots of recordings you can find online. Here's a link to one of many available from The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful_breathing or, you can record yourself reading the prompts from last newsletter blended together with the prompts here and listen to them as you meditate for gentle reminders.

February is Heart Month

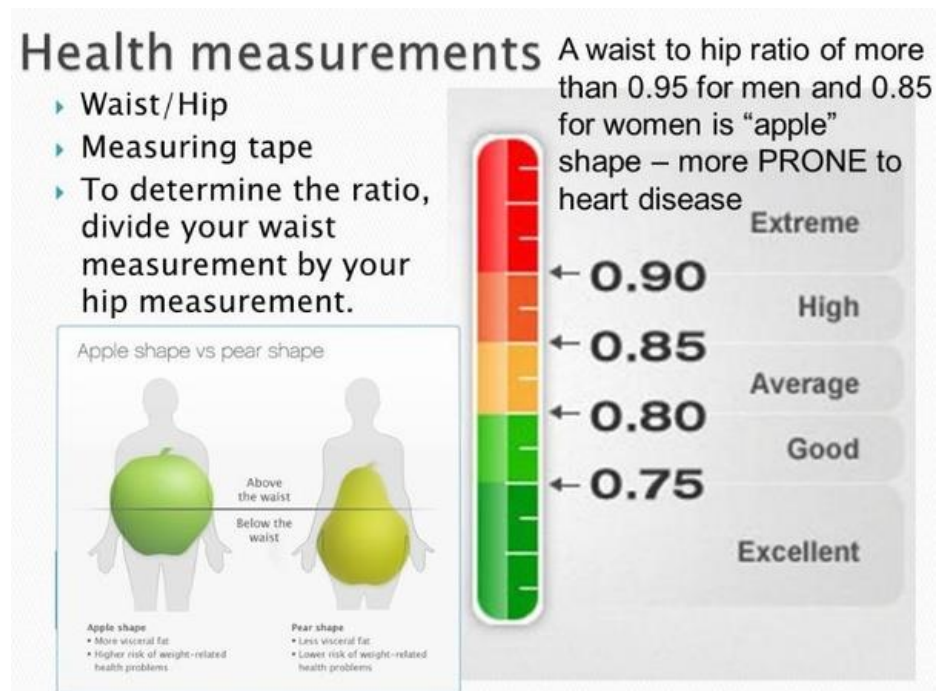
Heart Month is a federally designated event that encourages Americans to focus on their heart health and get their families, friends and communities involved. President Lyndon B. Johnson proclaimed the first American Heart Month in February 1964 via Proclamation 3566 on Dec. 30, 1963.



Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease and stroke, remains the leading cause of death globally, taking more than 17.6 million lives. That number is expected to rise to more than 23.6 million by 2030 – and women are at an increased risk. You are encouraged to do something to acknowledge heart month and pay a bit of attention to your own heart disease risk:

Some suggestions:

- Get a tape measure and measure the circumference of your waist and hips and calculate their ratio. If you fall into a high risk category, start thinking about tracking this measurement more frequently and see if you can improve it.



- Calculate your heart attack risk. There several online tools that can help you do this. Again, if you fall into a high risk category, think about tracking this more frequently. Here is one you can try: <http://static.heart.org/riskcalc/app/index.html#!/baseline-risk> And of course if your status precludes you lowering your risk, make sure your health behaviors optimize your situation.
- **Raise awareness by wearing red, particularly on National Wear Red Day, the first Friday of February.** This is part of the GoRed For Women® campaign developed by the American Heart Association in 2004 to bring attention and awareness to the issue of heart health among women, as research shows that many women are unfamiliar with the symptoms of a heart attack.



- **Review your CPR..** It's not feasible to take a live CPR class right now but that shouldn't stop you from reviewing the skills necessary.

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/how-to-do-cpr-1298446>

- **Be proud of yourself** because of your involvement in the Wellness Program. Clearly you are making choices to practice healthful behaviors like exercise, health healthy eating, stress management, and maintaining a good sense of . Keep it up please.

If you want to spend some time looking at resources that fit in with your healthful living, here is a worthwhile website: <https://www.nih.gov/health-information/your-healthiest-self-wellness-toolkits>

- **Connect Dental Health with Heart Health.** Strange as it sounds, keeping those pearly whites clean and polished might aid in the fight against heart disease. Recent research suggests that gum disease may raise your risk of heart disease. The American Dental Association recommends brushing your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste as well as flossing once a day.

- **Celebrate Valentine's day.** This falls in February too and what better way to acknowledge your heart than by recognizing this day. You could send cards to loved ones, decorate your living space, spread flowers throughout your neighborhood, and think about heart-healthy treats that fit in. If nothing else, spend some time dancing to your favorite music.

