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**INSIDE: Lower Your Cholesterol
Popular Resolutions
9 things to do in the New Year**

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Easy ways to lower your cholesterol

High cholesterol is an issue for many men and women, who may or may not know that excessive cholesterol in the blood can increase a person's risk of cardiovascular disease. That's a genuine concern for many people, as the American Heart Association notes that cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.

The link between high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease has long since been established, but the good news is that even men and women with considerably high cholesterol levels can greatly reduce their risk of one day developing cardiovascular disease. Some may need the help of prescription medication to lower their cholesterol, while others might only need to make certain lifestyle changes to lower their cholesterol.

Men and women should discuss a plan of attack to lower their cholesterol levels with a physician,

who will determine if medication should be a part of the plan. Even if medication is a factor, the following are some lifestyle changes men and women with high or moderate cholesterol levels can make to reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease.

Shed those extra pounds. According to the Mayo Clinic, losing as little as 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can greatly reduce cholesterol levels. There are a number of ways to lose weight, but the most successful way to lose weight and keep it off typically involves adopting a more active lifestyle and coupling that with a healthy diet. The AHA recommends 30 minutes of physical activity each day. This can include any number of activities that get you off the couch and exercising, including walking, biking, swimming, and jogging.

An additional benefit of exercising to lose weight is that it can raise your so-called "good" cholesterol

(also known as high-density lipoprotein, or HDL), which can protect you against a heart attack. Many medical experts believe HDL carries cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver, where the cholesterol is then passed from the body.

Embrace heart-healthy foods. One of the more effective, yet often most difficult, ways to lower cholesterol is to make dietary changes, forgoing unhealthy fare for more heart-friendly foods. The idea of changing one's diet does not appeal to many people, but a more heart-healthy diet does not have to be devoid of taste. You can still eat red meat and dairy products, but keep them to a minimum, as both red meat and dairy can raise your "bad" cholesterol. Also known as low-density lipoprotein, or LDL, bad cholesterol can combine with other substances to form plaque, a thick, hard deposit that can narrow the arteries and make them less

flexible, increasing one's risk of heart attack and stroke. Red meat and dairy tend to have a good deal of saturated fat, which the Mayo Clinic suggests should account for less than 7 percent of your daily caloric intake.

There are many ways to make more heart-healthy dietary choices, some of which include selecting whole grains (including whole wheat pasta and whole wheat flour), loading up on fruits and vegetables that are high in fiber (which can lower cholesterol) and choosing entrees for foods that are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as certain types of fish, which help lower LDL cholesterol.

Stop smoking. Smokers have a surefire way to reduce their cholesterol, though some may find it more difficult than making any dietary changes. Quitting smoking has an almost immediate impact on the

health of your heart, which is at a lower risk of attack within 24 hours of quitting smoking. Within one year of quitting, your risk of heart attack is half that of someone who continues to smoke, and in 15 years your risk of heart disease will be similar to that of someone who has never smoked. In addition, quitting smoking may improve your HDL cholesterol level. Though it might not be easy, quitting smoking might be the most effective way to improve your cholesterol levels while lowering your risk for cardiovascular disease.

More information about lowering your cholesterol is available at www.heart.org.

Popular New Year Resolutions

Every year, right before the clock strikes 12 on December 31, people far and wide make resolutions for the new year. There are some common themes from year to year, with certain resolutions topping the lists.

Lose weight: Whether they're inspired by goals of healthy living, the reality of stepping on a scale after holiday dining or simply because clothes have been a little snug, people often resolve to lose weight in the year ahead.

Quit smoking: Individuals are feeling increased pressure to give up the habit due to smoking bans in many buildings and public spaces. Plus, it's one of the worst things a person can do for his or her health.

Get fit: In conjunction with losing weight, the overall quest for physical fitness drives up gym membership numbers every January.

Tame finances: The first credit card bill after the holiday season may be a wakeup call for those who have had difficulty balancing a budget. This is often a time when people make plans to get finances under control at the start of the new year.

Enjoy life more: Many people are taking personal happiness into their own hands. Perhaps thanks to a troublesome economy and other sources of sour news, it has become common in recent years for resolutions to be made concerning reducing stress and having more fun. This may involve everything from spending more time with family to taking time for leisure activities to simply enjoying more of the hobbies one finds fun.



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9 THINGS TO DO WHEN THE NEW YEAR ARRIVES

People across the globe anxiously await the arrival of the new year. Different cultures and religions celebrate their own new year at different times, but for much of the world, January 1 marks the date for change and renewal. With so much emphasis placed on what people will be doing for the last day of the year, little thought may be given to what to do after the clock strikes 12. Each minute afterward opens up the possibilities to begin fresh with new goals and tasks.

For those wondering how to commence the new year, there are many ways to tackle the first day and thereafter -- after you have recovered from the New Year's Eve celebration, that is. Take down holiday decorations. While there are some people who prefer to leave up their Christmas decorations until after the celebration of the Epiphany, or Three Kings Day, by January 1 many are ready to say goodbye to the holiday season for another year. Having the day off of work and school enables you to spend time removing decorations from the house and taking down the tree, especially before dried-out pine needles become more than you can handle.

Shop post-holiday sales. After spending several months buying for every person on your list, this could be a time that you focus on picking up some things for yourself or the household. Stores may need to liquidate holiday stock and other inventory to make room for spring styles. Many shoppers find the deals hard to pass up when shopping in the early days of January. Check online to comparison shop, and scour the Internet for any printable coupons that can earn you even bigger discounts.

Visit family and friends. This time of year may be happy for some, but for those far from members of the family or seniors who may have lost many close companions, the winter and post-holiday season could bring on the blues. Visiting extended family you may not have seen during the holidays is one way to pass the day. You also can volunteer some of your time at a senior center or assisted-living facility to spread some post-holiday cheer. Discard expired foods and medicines. Take this opportunity to throw out any medications that expire this year, which will give you a head start on spring cleaning as well. Toss out old makeup and cosmetic products and make a list of new items to buy. Also, take inventory of the refrigerator and freezer, cleaning out any items that are no longer recognizable or that are past the recommended date. Head to the movies. Go to the movie theater and take in a flick with the family. January is not the most active time for new releases, but there are some films released in the first month of the year. You can enjoy a lazy day with some cinematic magic and a bag of popcorn.

Make a folder to store tax preparation paperwork. Tax season is just around the corner. Use this time to collect any paperwork you already may have received and put it in a safe place. Expect new statements of past earnings, any information about interest earned on bank statements and other pertinent tax documents to start arriving. Also, if you use an accountant to help file your taxes, call his or her office and book an appointment before his or her schedule fills up.

Watch a football game. After weeks of running around at a break-neck pace, use this day to lounge around and recharge. Chances are you can find a football game on television. Order in a pizza and cheer on your favorite team.

Encourage the kids to put down the toys and pick up a book. Many students will be returning to school soon after an extended winter recess. Have them get back into the swing of things by brushing up on lessons last touched on in December. Host a post-holiday pot luck. Clean out the refrigerator of those salvageable leftovers from your New Year's Eve bash. Invite others over with their own foods and host one last party before you have to get back to the daily grind. There are many ways to start off the new year on the right foot. Get a head start on cleaning or organizing, or relax once more with friends and family.

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Ring in the New Year with your pet

It's the time of year when people make resolutions to be a better and healthier version of themselves. So why not make resolutions that will mutually benefit you and your pet? Here are some ideas to help you and yours have the best year yet. Eat more fresh food. This may seem like an easy resolution. However, it takes time and preparation. For humans, this means incorporating more fruits and veggies into your diet while for pets this means ensuring that their pet food uses ingredients such as fresh turkey, salmon and duck, fresh omega 3 and 6 oils (from coconuts and canola), wholesome berries and fruits and vegetables like peas, spinach and carrots. Now Fresh premium petfood by Petcurean is a great example. You can learn more about choosing a pet food with the freshest, healthiest ingredients at petcurean.com.

Get more exercise. Did you know pets can decrease our blood pressure and cholesterol levels and increase our opportunities for exercise, outdoor activities and socialization? Exercising together will not only help optimize your health but also allow you to spend more time together.

Use that agenda. This doesn't seem like a resolution, but sometimes making a plan is the only way resolutions will come to life. Most of us schedule time for other appointments and meetings, so why not set aside some priority time for pets too?



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