One Dose of “No More Excuses”

When 17-year-old Bree Boyce went to the doctor with knee problems, she weighed 234 pounds. At the time, she couldn’t walk a block without stopping to rest. Like one-third of all teens and two-thirds of all adults in the United States, Bree was overweight. Being overweight or obese increases your risk for developing diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Her doctor told it to her straight: She had to lose the weight to avoid knee surgery and other health problems down the road. And that’s when Bree decided to quit making excuses about being overweight.

“I wanted to be a Broadway star and go to college and have a family one day,” she said. “My weight was hindering all those things. I decided to make a change that day.”

Instead of trying another fad diet, she started eating healthier and taking a walk every day. Once she started to see results, she moved on to working out at the gym and taking fitness classes. Within a few years, Bree had lost 110 pounds and was crowned Miss South Carolina. Last month she was a contestant in the 2012 Miss America Pageant. If you need to lose a few pounds, start today. You may not be planning on walking down the runway, but you can set a goal to lose weight and start doing something about it.

Go on a walk during your lunch break. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Eat a healthy breakfast at home instead of a high-calorie, high-fat, drive-thru breakfast. Set a goal and go for it. The only thing you have to lose is a few pounds and the excuses that have been holding you back.


Take Your Pick for a Berry Good Day

Add them to your cereal or grab a handful for a snack. Berries are sweet and delicious in a smoothie or on top of a scoop of low-fat frozen yogurt.

Brightly colored raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries are loaded with vitamin C to strengthen your immune system. These berries also contain potassium to support your heart and muscles, and fiber to help your digestion. They are also rich in antioxidants that can help prevent cancer, and slow memory loss as you age. Eating berries can also help you manage your cholesterol and lower your blood pressure.

In a separate study, researchers found that eating strawberries, blueberries, and cranberries helped lower blood pressure and reduce the risk for heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. That’s good news when about one-third of adults in the United States have high blood pressure. Left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to heart disease and stroke as well as kidney failure and vision problems. Try to eat a cup of berries per day in addition to other fruits and vegetables for best health.

Berries add a lot of flavor and color to your food. Buy them fresh or frozen, or try growing them yourself. Let your mouth savor their sweetness, and you’ll have a berry good day.

Berry Facts for Better Health

Find out more about the health benefits of raspberries, strawberries, and blueberries:

- **Strawberries** – berryhealth.org/Information/2011Strawberryfactsheet2.pdf
- **Blueberries** – berryhealth.org/Information/WildBlueFactsheet.pdf

For more information about how to lose weight, see www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/losing_weight/getting_started.html

ChooseMyPlate.gov
Extreme Makeover: Healthy Habit Edition

If you think you could handle a healthy habit makeover in 2012, you might need to start by taking a hard look at your bad habits. Smoking, drinking too much, and overeating are habits that can directly affect your health. For others, bad habits like overspending, wasting time, or nail biting can put a dent in your self-esteem or your pocketbook. Fortunately, bad habits can be replaced with good ones.

“Habits play an important role in our health,” says Dr. Nora Volkow of the National Institutes of Health. “Understanding how we develop habits can help us change our lifestyles and adopt healthier behaviors.”

If you’re ready for a healthy habit makeover this year, here’s how to get started:

- **Recognize your bad habits.** Then come up with a plan to counteract them. Bring a healthy snack to work instead of plugging the candy machine with quarters every afternoon. Take up a healthy hobby, and spend less time on the Internet or watching TV.

- **Visualize your response to temptation.** If you salivate at the thought of your favorite brand of potato chips or sleeping in an extra 30 minutes in the morning, you need to change the way you think. Start by visualizing the way you would like to respond. Imagine yourself eating a healthy snack instead of the chips, or waking up early to fit in a workout at the gym, and how great it feels to make the better choice.

- **Get help from your family and friends.** One of the best ways to be successful at breaking old habits and forming new ones is by joining a support group. Be accountable. Ask your family, friends, or co-workers to help you. Give them a regular report on your efforts, and welcome their advice and encouragement.

- **Keep in mind that you didn’t develop your bad habits overnight.** And you don’t have to keep them if you don’t want them. But you may need a little patience in turning them around. If you slip up, don’t give up. Just start over. With a consistent effort, you can develop healthier habits this year that will last a lifetime.

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Keep the Beat with American Heart Month

You don’t have to look far to know that heart health is a major issue in the United States. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. About 785,000 people a year have a heart attack. Some survive. Some become disabled. And some die. Fortunately, you can reduce your risk for heart disease by making healthy choices and celebrating American Heart Month in February.

Here are 10 ways you can make your heart healthier:

1. **Skip red meat and processed meat.** Choose healthier alternatives such as fish, skinless poultry, beans, lentils, tofu, or veggie burgers.

2. **Eat fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese, and other dairy products.**

3. **Cut back on foods high in cholesterol** like egg yolks, cheese-burgers, ice cream, and steak.

4. **Cut back on foods like cookies, crackers, and cake that contain white flour and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.**

5. **Drink fewer sugary soft drinks** and a lot more water.

6. **Choose foods with less sodium/salt.** Try eating more fruits and vegetables instead of fast food, frozen dinners, and meals-in-a-box.

7. **Drink less alcohol.** If you choose to drink, limit your intake to no more than one drink per day for women, or two drinks per day for men.

8. **Keep an eye on your portion sizes.** See www.ChooseMyPlate.gov for more about what you should put on your plate. Also, take the Portion Distortion quiz http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion to see how portion sizes have changed over the years.

9. **Exercise at least 30 minutes a day.** Try walking, biking, cycling. Or take a fitness class.

10. **Quit smoking,** and avoid secondhand smoke. Pick something from this heart-healthy list, and start today. When you make an effort to take care of your heart, you’ll be healthier and live longer.

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Q: Can exercise lower bad cholesterol levels?

A: Go to www.wellsource.info/wn/ask-cholesterol.pdf to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: evan@wellsource.com, subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

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Stand up, stretch, and move more this month.
Q. Can exercise help lower bad cholesterol levels?

A. High levels of “bad cholesterol,” or LDL cholesterol, can cause heart disease. The good news is that exercise helps prevent this disease and keeps your arteries healthy in several ways:

Prevents Weight Gain
Exercise helps burn extra calories. Every extra pound of fat you have produces more cholesterol. This raises your “bad cholesterol” level and your risk for heart disease.

Raises HDL Cholesterol
HDL cholesterol, or “good cholesterol,” helps remove bad cholesterol in your arteries. You can increase your HDL cholesterol by exercising at least 30-40 minutes a day. In a recent study, a group of people exercised three to four times per week for 20 to 40 minutes. Researchers found that regular exercise helped increase HDL levels. As a result, the group also lowered LDL levels and the risk for heart disease by about 10 percent.

Reduces Inflammation
Exercise helps reduce inflammation in your arteries. Left untreated, this inflammation can lead to a build-up of bad cholesterol and clog your arteries.

Cuts Risk for Heart Attack
Most studies show that people who exercise regularly cut their risk of a heart attack in half. If you are not physically active, you’re at greater risk for heart attack and other health risk factors.

Other Benefits
Exercise also helps lower your blood pressure and blood sugar levels. When these are high, they can damage your arteries. Exercise also strengthens your heart muscle, and improves circulation to your heart, brain, and the rest of your body.

Eat healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, legumes, and other foods high in fiber. It’s one of the best ways to manage your cholesterol. You’re already on the right track if you are following a healthy diet. But sometimes diet alone won’t lower cholesterol levels enough.

Most people don’t realize that their arteries are blocked until they have a heart attack or stroke. Before that happens to you, make exercise a regular part of your day.

Choose exercise activities that you enjoy. Try to exercise for 30 to 60 minutes a day. When you exercise, you should be active enough to raise your heart rate, breathe deeply, but not be out of breath. These are all signs that your exercise is making metabolic improvement to your health.

Sources: Archives of Internal Medicine. 2007; 167:999-1008.
“A Healthy Cholesterol Level.” Online Wellness Center.
Monthly Health Challenge™

Sit Less, Move More

Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Keep a written record of the days you choose to be more active.
2. Read “Sit Less, Move More.”
3. To complete the Challenge, you must do something from the list below to be more active on at least 22 days this month. Also, try to take a brief break for every hour of sitting.
4. Keep a record of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

Do you know how much time you spend sitting each day? Think about it. You watch the world go by sitting in a car, taxi or bus. If you work in an office, you probably spend almost eight hours a day sitting at your desk. Then there’s the time you sit at home – in front of your computer, or while eating dinner, reading the newspaper, paying your bills, or watching your favorite TV shows.

When the weekend rolls around, you head to the movie theater to sit through the latest thriller, or attend a sporting event and sit in the bleachers to watch the game. At the end of the day, you spend an average of 9 hours or more a day just sitting.

And that’s a problem. In a recent study by the American Cancer Society, researchers found that sitting six or more hours per day increases your risk for early death from any cause by 18 percent for men and 37 percent for women, even if you exercise regularly. Your office chair just might come with a Surgeon General’s warning someday that says,”警告: Sitting may be hazardous to your health.” Even if you get daily exercise, you still have increased health risks if you sit the majority of the day.

Fortunately, you don’t have to take all the statistics you hear about your health sitting down. You can choose to be more active, even if your situation at home or at work calls for a marathon of sitting. In the 86,400 seconds that tick by during the day, you make hundreds of decisions that impact your health. You can decide right now to be more active. Stand up, stretch your arms above your head, take a deep breath, and exhale. Don’t you feel better already?

Bottoms Up

Believe it or not, there was a time when you had to get up out of your chair and walk across the room to change the TV channel, adjust the thermostat, or turn on the lights. Now you can control all of those things from a smart phone or universal remote control without getting out of your seat.

But there’s a price to pay for sitting around so much. When you’re sitting, you burn fewer calories, your muscles tighten, and your posture suffers which puts more strain on your back. Back pain is the leading cause of disability in working Americans. Sitting for long periods of time is especially bad on the back, and has been linked to an increased risk for cancer and diabetes. Bottoms up! It’s time to be more active.

Stand up and look out the window. Walk to the water cooler and get a drink. Get up off the couch to change the channel. Bend over to tie your shoes.

Movement, exercise, and just getting up out of your chair, are all simple activities you can do instead of sitting for hours. It doesn’t take a lot of effort.

In a recent study, 16 non-obese people were fed the exact same diet which included 1,000 calories more than required to maintain their weight. During the eight-week study, the participants were prohibited from exercising, and every movement was recorded with an electronic device. Some participants gained weight, while others did not.
Researchers found that the people who did not gain weight moved around more by taking the stairs, walking across the office to visit a co-worker, or doing chores at home. The people who gained weight spent two hours more per day sitting than the group that did not gain weight.

In another study, office workers who reported neck and shoulder pain from working at their desks in front a computer were asked to perform two minutes of exercise per day with resistance bands. After spending just 120 seconds per day doing the exercises for 10 weeks, the workers reported less neck and shoulder pain on the job.

If you want to combat the downside of sitting, you’ve got to find ways to be more active. And it doesn’t have to take a lot of time. When you make the effort, you’ll burn more calories, be better at managing your weight, feel healthier, and add years to your life. Here are some ways you can be more active:

At Work
✔ Take the stairs.
✔ Hold a meeting with co-workers on a walk.
✔ Go to the gym during your lunch hour.
✔ Stand up and stretch. See how to perform some basic stretches at www.wellsource.info/wn/stretch.pdf
✔ Walk to give a message to a co-worker.
✔ Visit the water cooler for a drink.
✔ Clean up or reorganize your office.
✔ Walk to the mailroom to pick up your mail.
✔ Pace back and forth when you’re thinking or talking on the phone.
✔ Hold standing-only meetings.
✔ Start a lunchtime walking group.
✔ Make the most of your commute. If you take the bus, get off one or two stops early and walk.

At Home
✔ Walk through your house to find a family member, instead of yelling.
✔ Take out the garbage. Setting it by the door doesn’t count.
✔ Walk your dog, instead of paying someone to do it for you or ignoring your four-footed friend.
✔ Clean your kitchen as fast as you can.

✔ Replace your office chair with a stability ball. It will strengthen your abdominal muscles.
✔ Use a stand-up desk at work for reading and writing.

✔ Fold all your laundry standing up. Then race from room to room to put it away.
✔ Get up off the couch to change the channel or adjust the volume.
✔ Walk to a friend’s house to visit.
✔ Clean up your garage.
✔ Rearrange your furniture.
✔ Vacuum your house. And don’t be lazy. Move the rug this time.
✔ Walk around when you’re on the phone.
✔ Walk to your mailbox, instead of rolling down your window to collect it.

Medical and Science in Sports and Exercise 41:998-1005, May 2009

Researchers found a strong association with daily sitting time and risk of mortality. As sitting time increases to 50% or more of each day, the risk of death from any cause increases by 11-54%.
✔ Toss a ball or Frisbee®.
✔ Play active video games that require dancing and movement.
✔ Use your fitness equipment that’s been sitting in the garage (i.e., exercise bike, treadmill, weight set). Start by dusting it off.

On the Go
✔ Park far away when you go to the store.
✔ Walk a lap around the store before you begin your shopping.
✔ Take the stairs (as long as they’re well-lit) instead of the elevator or escalator.
✔ Stand instead of sit while waiting for a ride, interview, or appointment.
✔ Pick up litter.
✔ Go inside instead of using the drive-thru.
✔ Turn shopping into a race, and find your items as fast as possible.
✔ When you can, carry your groceries instead of using a cart.
✔ Lift your gallon of milk or laundry detergent a few times before you drop it in your shopping cart or put it away at home.
✔ Push your kids in a stroller or shopping cart.
✔ Power-walk around the mall on rainy days.

Keep On Moving
If you’re a high-energy person who likes to get a lot of things done in a day and doesn’t like sitting still, you’ve got the right idea about being more active. But if your natural tendency is to take up your spot as a couch potato at home or stay glued to your chair at the office, you’ve got to look for ways to keep on moving. All it takes is a few steps, and you’ll be on your way.

Sources:
American Cancer Society. 2010. http://tinyurl.com/2e7s2wt
American Journal of Epidemiology. 2010: 172(4)419-429
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
**Health Challenge™ Calendar**

**Sit Less, Move More**

**Instructions**
1. Post the Health Challenge Calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you were more active than you usually are.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you completed activities to be more active. You must meet this goal on at least 22 days during the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of best health!
4. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

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_______ Number of days this month I sat less and moved more
_______ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking

**Other wellness projects completed this month:**

__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

Name __________________________ Date __________________________