



February, Heart Health Month



February is time to focus on your heart. You're certainly aware of the importance of a healthy diet and active lifestyle in protecting your heart, but did you know your sweetheart also is part of your healthy life?

Being socially connected to your friends and family helps lower blood pressure, and promotes healing and maintenance of blood vessels. Making relationships a priority in your life has huge health benefits. There's no rule as to how many friends you should have or which family members you should be closest to. What counts is feeling connected, and that will vary depending on your needs and personality.

So, if you're lonely, find ways to reach out to others so you can keep your relationships and your heart healthy!

Health in the Headlines "Vitamin D Helps Prevent the Flu"

Vitamin D has gotten a lot of press in the past 5 years for all its amazing health benefits. But can it help fight the flu? There's a lot of research asking that very question. Some studies say "yes" others "no", and so far we don't have a solid answer. But what we do know is that vitamin D is protective against many illnesses and diseases, including osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, stroke and cancer. We also know that vitamin D deficiency is very common in the US.

Where do you get vitamin D? Sunlight. But if you have dark skin, or live in northern America in the winter, you're at a higher risk for deficiency. You're also at a higher risk of vitamin D deficiency if you use sunscreen regularly, or if you don't consume dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt.

How much vitamin D do you need?

1. **Have your doctor check your blood levels of vitamin D.** This will let you know if you're deficient and how much you need for certain.
2. **Eat foods rich in vitamin D.** Salmon, sardines, tuna, milk, liver, eggs and mushrooms can all help you get vitamin D from your diet. However, it doesn't add up very quickly. For example, you would have to drink 8 cups of milk or eat 25 eggs to get the recommended 1,000 IU for the day.
3. **Take a supplement.** Most of us need to take a supplement each day to get enough vitamin D. It's recommended to take 1,000 to 2,000 IU each day, but it's safe to take up to 4,000 per day.
4. **Get some sun.** It's best to get 15 minutes of sun before applying sunscreen. Don't worry about over-dosing on vitamin D. If you take a supplement and get some sun – your body won't produce more from the sun if you already have enough.

Resource Tech Corner



Lace up your sneakers, and put on your headphones because walking just became so much more than walking! With the fitness app, "**The Walk**", you are now the lead role in a spy thriller! You walk in the real world to move in the game. This app tracks your progress while making it a fun game with a new focus. It offers a compelling story that can be played pretty much any time, anywhere. Available in iOS and Android platforms at your favorite App store.

Feature Food Crimini Mushrooms

Crimini

Also known as baby 'bellas or browns, criminis are similar in appearance to whites, but have a light-tan to rich-brown cap and a firmer texture.



Mushrooms can add a wonderful savory flavor to many dishes. What about the health benefits?

Three reasons your body loves crimini mushrooms:

1. **Crimini Mushrooms support your immune system.** These mushrooms offer unique immune system support. In a remarkable way, unique phytonutrients found in crimini mushrooms change the way white blood cells go about their business. In some cases, they prevent white blood cells from becoming active when they would be better off remaining inactive. In other cases, they trigger white blood cell activity when more activity is needed.
2. **Crimini Mushrooms help reduce inflammation.** The risk of many common health problems—including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and certain types of cancer—is increased by the presence of chronic unwanted inflammation. To avoid chronic overproduction of pro-inflammatory molecules, it's helpful to include crimini mushrooms in your diet.
3. **Crimini Mushrooms protect your heart.** Protection against cardiovascular disease has become an area of special research interest in crimini mushrooms. Extracts from crimini mushrooms have been found to reduce the binding of certain immune cells onto the lining of the aorta. When mushrooms reduce this binding, they also lower the risk of damage to the aorta and to blood flow problems.

Be sure to keep them refrigerated. They quickly begin to lose their powerful healthful benefits by sitting on the counter for as little as one hour.

Mushroom, Asparagus and Brown Rice Pilaf

Adapted from Mayoclinic.com

- 1 cup of sliced fresh crimini mushrooms (or any kind of mushroom)
- 1 cup of asparagus spears cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- 3 cups of cooked long-grain brown rice
- ¼ cup of toasted pine nuts
- ¼ cup of chopped green onion
- 1 tablespoon of grated lemon peel (optional)
- ½ cup of fresh parsley, chopped (optional)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon of fresh ground black pepper

Cook brown rice according to instructions on the package, and set aside. In a large skillet, sauté mushrooms, asparagus and garlic in olive oil over medium high-heat until tender (about 2 minutes or so). Add cooked rice, toasted pine nuts, onions, lemon peel, parsley, salt and pepper. Stir and cook until heated thoroughly. Serve immediately.

Easy Baked Salmon from COOKS.COM

- Wild-caught salmon fillets
- Lemon juice
- Season to taste (try dill, tarragon, or thyme)

Squeeze lemon juice on fish, and add seasoning. Bake at 350 degrees until fish is opaque in color and flakes easily with a fork; about 10-20 minutes depending on size of the fish.