



As the leading cause of death in both men and women, heart disease is not something to take lightly. While having a personal or family history of heart disease can influence your risk of heart-related illnesses, most people can dramatically improve their cardiovascular fitness and resistance to heart disease through simple lifestyle changes.

February is American Heart Month, and this issue of *Balanced Living* focuses on all things cardiovascular: dietary changes that can positively influence your heart health, information on the signs of a heart attack and how to prevent one, a yoga pose that can be beneficial for the heart, and more.

Yours in health,

Andrew Weil, M.D.

## 5 Dietary Suggestions For A Healthy Heart

Keeping your heart healthy doesn't have to be difficult! With small yet impactful dietary choices, you can help lower your cholesterol and blood pressure, as well as reduce your risk for heart disease. Consider these five tips to adopt for your heart health:

**1 Avoid Trans Fats.** Reduce your intake of inflammatory trans fats from hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils that reduce HDL ("good") cholesterol levels and raise LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels. Instead, swap out these fats found in most margarine, snack foods, and some cooking oils with extra virgin olive oil as the primary fat in your diet.

continued on p.2

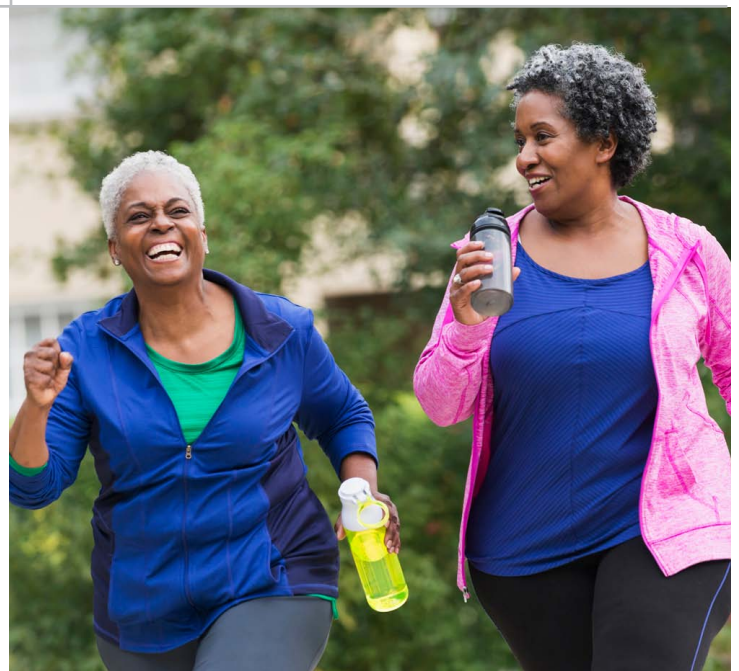
## Heart Attacks: Warning Signs & Prevention Tips

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in men and women, and knowing the symptoms of a [heart attack](#) is vital: the most effective window for treatment occurs during the first 60 minutes after symptoms manifest.

Some common symptoms of a heart attack shared by men and women include chest discomfort or a pressure sensation; arm discomfort; shortness of breath; sweating and clammy skin; and nausea, stomach pain and feelings of indigestion.

Aside from these symptoms, women are more likely than men to experience unusual fatigue, sleep disturbance, anxiety, and possibly throat, jaw and neck discomfort during a heart attack. Whether you are male or female, if you experience these symptoms and feel you might be having a heart attack, don't delay dialing 911.

continued on p.2



### Contents

**1** Heart Attack Warning Signs

**1** 5 Dietary Suggestions For A Healthy Heart

**2** Monthly Wellness Challenge: Fast Food

**3** Vitamins A to Zinc: CoQ10

**3** Yoga Pose: Hero Pose

**4** Seasonal Food: Broccoli

# Monthly Wellness Challenge



## Fast Food Snack Alternatives

If you find yourself eating fast foods make this the month you change that! Start by making portable, healthy snacks - three per week - to eat while on the go. Try whole, fresh fruits; a handful of nuts (almonds or walnuts); or fresh veggies with hummus.

## Heart Attack Warning Signs

continued from p.1

To help prevent heart attacks, a healthy lifestyle can go far. In addition to the tips in the article "5 Dietary Suggestions For A Healthy Heart," consider the following:

- **Manage the big risk factors.** Quit smoking, and if you have diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure, talk with your doctor about getting them under optimal control.
- **Get active.** Moderate physical activity helps keep the heart muscles strong, the arteries flexible, lower cholesterol and blood pressure, increase overall energy and helps elevate and stabilize mood. It can also help you manage your weight. If you are overweight, even modest [weight loss](#) of 10 pounds can significantly lower cardiovascular risks.
- **Manage stress.** Uncontrolled stress can raise blood pressure, cholesterol and [homocystein](#), and increases inflammation, which can increase risk for heart attacks. Practice relaxation techniques and stay social and laugh often.

## 5 Dietary Suggestions For A Healthy Heart

continued from p.1

Eating [wild, deep water fish](#) from the ocean such as salmon, sardines, and anchovies provide essential omega-3 fatty acids, which help to improve HDL cholesterol and reduce triglycerides.

- 2 **Eat More Onions.** In addition to being an excellent source of chromium, vitamin C, folate and dietary fiber, most varieties of onions contain the phytonutrient, allicin, which may help lower cholesterol and blood pressure. Always try to buy [organically grown](#) onions, as pesticides are commonly used on conventionally grown varieties.
- 3 **Eat More Garlic.** Garlic acts as a cardiovascular tonic, lowering cholesterol levels and blood pressure, as well as decreasing clot formation. It's better for you in its natural state – raw or lightly cooked – instead of powder form or in capsules. In order to maximize garlic's health-promoting properties, allow it to sit for at least five minutes after chopping or crushing before eating.
- 4 **Cut Out Processed Foods.** Excessive sodium has been linked to [high blood pressure](#) and heart disease, making it important to avoid processed foods. Additionally, following a low-glycemic diet by eliminating or restricting refined carbohydrates such as cookies, crackers, soft breads, chips and sodas can help lower triglyceride levels and improve HDL.
- 5 **Eat Chocolate.** Recent research shows that eating a few pieces of dark chocolate each week is a heart-healthy treat. Scientists believe that the monounsaturated fat from the cocoa butter in dark chocolate can raise HDL, while the cacao provides antioxidants that protect our cells from free radical damage, which have been linked to heart disease. Choose fair trade or organic dark chocolate that provides at least 70 percent cocoa content.



# Yoga Pose: Hero Pose



Continue your yoga practice with this month's pose that also provides heart health benefits. As one of Dr. Weil's favorite yoga poses for stretching the thighs, hips, and ankles, the Hero Pose is a popular sitting asana, meaning posture. It is commonly used as a starting pose that relaxes the body and allows for breathing exercises.

According to results published in the *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*, practicing the Hero Pose can temporarily speed up [metabolism](#) and enhance sympathetic nervous system activity. As a result, these increased physiological functions can support meditation focus, breathing, and overall health.

The health benefits of this pose include:

- **Stretching and improving flexibility of hips, thighs, knees, and ankles.**
- **Improving digestion and may help relieve symptoms of menopause.**
- **Providing relaxing and meditative benefits.**
- **Therapeutic for high blood pressure, breathing problems and stress.**

Get [step-by-step instruction](#) for practicing the Hero Pose. There are many variations of this pose to modify according to your level. If you have problems with high or low blood pressure, monitor it while performing this pose as sitting in this position for too long can cause a change in blood pressure. Also, use caution when standing up from the pose, as this too may cause a sudden, hazardous change in blood pressure.

## Vitamins A to Zinc, courtesy of the Weil Vitamin Advisor

### CoQ10 And Heart Health

Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10), may be a valuable part of an overall lifestyle to support cardiovascular health. A potent antioxidant that has been linked to normal cardiac functioning, many cardiologists recommend supplemental CoQ10 for those taking statin drugs (which can effectively lower cholesterol and inflammation levels, but reduce the body's ability to produce CoQ10). Learn more about [CoQ10](#).



# Seasonal Food: Broccoli



Dr. Weil has always recommended broccoli as part of a healthful diet, especially with its powerful cholesterol-lowering effect. Its fiber-related components bind to bile acids which naturally bind dietary cholesterol, thereby lowering overall cholesterol levels.

Additionally, this versatile vegetable:

- 1 Can improve energy** with its high content of vitamin C, a micronutrient that supports the normal processes of cellular energy production.
- 2 Promotes a healthy nervous system.** Broccoli is a good source of [vitamin B2](#) (riboflavin), which can help prevent migraines, as well as calm and nourish nerve fibers.
- 3 Supports bone health.** Broccoli is abundant in vitamin K and calcium - both of which help keep bones strong and reduce the risk of [osteoporosis](#).

One of the healthiest ways to prepare broccoli is to lightly steam it, which can help to retain the nutritional components better than other cooking methods such as boiling.

Try broccoli in these recipes:

- **[Braised Broccoli, Orange & Parmesan](#)**
- **[Broccoli Pancakes](#)**
- **[Chickpea & Broccoli Masala Curry](#)**
- **[Hemp Crusted Salmon w/ Chinese Broccoli, Lotus, Peas & Yuzu Ponzu](#)**