

Show your heart some love

According to the American Heart Association, someone has a heart attack approximately every 25 seconds, and approximately every minute, someone dies of one. There are many factors that can lead to heart disease, including genetics and lifestyle choices. You can't change your family history, but by practicing healthier habits, you can do a lot to improve your odds of avoiding heart disease.

- **See your health care provider for regular check-ups.** Ask about your risk for heart disease. Have your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers checked, and ask if you're at a healthy weight. Your provider can also help you set realistic goals for lifestyle changes. Increasing exercise and making better food choices can help lower your weight, blood pressure and cholesterol.
- **Be physically active.** Even during the cold winter months, it's important to get regular exercise. Enjoy the winter scenery hiking on nature trails or try ice skating, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. You can rent equipment at some facilities to try out a new activity. Spend some family-time in the backyard building snow sculptures or making snow angels together. Bundle up the kids and have fun!
- **Eat a heart-healthy diet.** For a change, try roasting vegetables instead of boiling or microwaving them. Roasting makes them crispy, caramelized and full of flavor. Not only is it a great winter meal side-dish, but you'll help boost your intake of protective antioxidants. Carrots, sweet potatoes, broccoli, peppers, asparagus, Brussels sprouts and cauliflower are all delicious when roasted. It's simple to do:
 - Line a baking pan with foil. Preheat the oven to 400° Fahrenheit.
 - Cut the vegetables into chunks, place a single-layer on the pan, and drizzle with a small amount of olive oil.
 - Sprinkle on herbs of your choice. Parsley, basil and rosemary work well. Remember, salt can raise blood pressure so use sparingly. Toss the vegetables on the pan lightly to coat the oil and seasonings.
 - Bake for about 30 minutes and check. If they're lightly browned and tender, remove them. Different vegetables require different cooking times. If some aren't done, turn them with a spatula, and place back in the oven. They could take another 20 to 30 minutes, but remove them when they're at the texture and color you like.
- **If you smoke, quit.** It's one of the best things you can do to prevent heart disease. More people die from smoking-related heart disease than from cancers. Talk to your health care provider about the best smoking cessation method for you. Contact the NYS Smokers' Quitline for additional help. You may also be eligible for nicotine replacement therapy. You can reach them by calling 1-866-NY-QUITS or online at nysmokefree.com.

Independent Health members who would like more information about heart disease risk and management can speak with one of our experienced health coaches. Simply call 1-800-501-3439, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. TDD users call 716-631-3108.