

Wellness

Wednesday



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Your Heart Has An 'Age,' Too. Here Are 7 Ways To Keep It Young.

Taking care of your heart is essential for maintaining good overall health. Did you know that your heart has an "age" that may not always correlate with your actual age? Your heart age is determined by factors such as blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and lifestyle habits. We'll explore seven ways to keep your heart young and healthy.

Understanding Heart Age

Your heart age is a measure of your risk for a stroke or heart attack. It is assessed by considering factors such as your chronological age, underlying health issues, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and lifestyle habits. The New York City Health Department's Heart Age Calculator is a valuable tool that can help you understand your risk and assess whether your heart age is higher or lower than your actual age.

If your heart age is older than your current age, it indicates an elevated modifiable risk for a cardiac event. It's crucial to pay attention to signs that your heart may be aging, such as chest pain during physical activity, lightheadedness, fatigue, headaches, and confusion. If you experience any of these symptoms, consult a cardiologist to ensure your heart is functioning optimally.

Lowering LDL Cholesterol

One of the significant factors in maintaining a healthy heart is managing your low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels. LDL cholesterol is often referred to as "bad cholesterol." For most individuals, LDL levels should be lower than 100 mg/dl to prevent heart attacks and strokes. However, if you have known heart disease, the recommended LDL cholesterol level is lower than 70 mg/dl.

To determine your LDL cholesterol level, consult with your doctor and request a coronary calcium scan or a routine blood test. Lowering your LDL cholesterol can significantly reduce your risk of cardiovascular events.

Engaging in Regular Exercise

Regular exercise plays a vital role in maintaining heart health. The American Heart Association recommends getting at least 150 minutes of exercise per week, including aerobic and weight-bearing exercises. Activities such as walking, swimming, or using lightweight dumbbells are excellent choices.

Regular exercise can help reduce blood pressure, improve cholesterol levels, and maintain a healthy weight. It is essential to find an exercise routine that suits your preferences and lifestyle. Consider finding a workout buddy to hold you accountable and make exercising more enjoyable.



Managing Stress Levels

High stress levels can have a negative impact on your heart health. Chronic stress may lead to high blood pressure, increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes. It is crucial to manage your stress levels effectively. Various techniques can help reduce stress, such as exercise, meditation, and breathing exercises. These activities can lower stress hormones and increase endorphin levels. Additionally, consider seeking support from a therapist if you are dealing with significant stressors in your life.

Adopting a Nutritious Diet

Maintaining a nutritious diet is essential for heart health. While you can still enjoy occasional treats, it is crucial to include lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables in your meals. The Mediterranean diet, which consists of fatty fish, nuts, and legumes, has been shown to be beneficial for heart health. Aim to include antioxidant-rich fresh fruits and vegetables in your diet. Additionally, incorporating whole-food fiber, omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and plant sterols into your meals can provide additional heart-healthy benefits. Foods like nuts, fish, yogurt, fruits, and vegetables are excellent sources of these nutrients.

Quit Smoking and Vaping

Smoking and vaping can have detrimental effects on both lung health and heart health. Inhaling the chemicals present in cigarettes and vaping products can constrict blood vessels, cause inflammation, and affect blood pressure and heart rate. If you smoke or vape, it is essential to quit for the sake of your heart health. Quitting smoking can be challenging, but there are resources available, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, that can provide support and assistance.

Prioritizing Quality Sleep

Getting enough sleep is crucial for maintaining good heart health. Most adults should aim for seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Sufficient sleep not only helps with memory and growth but also reduces the risk of obesity and high blood pressure, which are both risk factors for poor heart health. If you have trouble sleeping, consult with a sleep medicine doctor to identify the underlying causes and explore viable treatment options. Poor sleep quality can significantly impact your heart health, so it is essential to address any sleep-related issues.

Understanding Genetic Factors

While there are certain risk factors that you can actively change to prevent heart disease, such as weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels, there are also genetic factors that you cannot modify. If you have a first-degree relative who experienced a heart attack at a young age, you may be at increased risk of the same condition. Knowing your family's medical history can help you take preventative steps, such as seeking early screenings from a cardiologist. By proactively managing your heart health, you can reduce your risk of developing heart disease or experiencing a cardiac event.

Taking care of your heart is crucial for maintaining good overall health. By understanding your heart age and adopting healthy lifestyle habits, you can keep your heart young and reduce your risk of cardiovascular events. Lowering LDL cholesterol, engaging in regular exercise, managing stress levels, adopting a nutritious diet, quitting smoking and vaping, prioritizing quality sleep, and understanding genetic factors are all key components of maintaining a healthy heart. Remember to consult with healthcare professionals for personalized advice and guidance on your heart health journey.



WHITE CHICKEN CHILI



INGREDIENTS

Equipment:

- Dutch Oven or large pot

Ingredients:

- olive oil spray
- 2 small poblano peppers, sliced
- 1 sweet onion, sliced
- 1 1/2 tablespoon cumin
- 15 oz can white northern or navy beans, undrained
- 4 cups low sodium chicken broth
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 1/2 pounds chicken breasts, or boneless chicken thighs
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, plus a few pinches
- 4 6-inch corn tortillas, yellow or white
- 1 cup sweet corn, fresh or frozen
- chopped fresh cilantro, thin sliced jalapeno rounds & lime wedges for topping
- optional toppings: sliced avocado, Greek yogurt, low-fat sour cream, diced red onion, or jack cheese

WHITE CHICKEN CHILI

This is a perfect choice if you're looking for a delicious, healthy and comforting meal for chilly days or whenever you want something hearty and satisfying. This twist on the classic chili recipe uses white beans and chicken instead of the usual red beans and beef, creating a lighter and more flavorful dish.

WHAT IS WHITE CHICKEN CHILI?

White chicken chili is a flavorful stew that combines tender chicken with white beans, poblano peppers, fresh corn, and spices. Unlike its red counterpart, which is typically tomato-based and spicier, white bean chicken chili is usually milder. It's often finished with sour cream or Greek yogurt to add richness and a velvety texture. This twist on traditional chili is lighter, packed with flavor, easy to make, and can be customized to suit your taste preferences.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 1/2 cups, Calories: 372 kcal, Carbohydrates: 40.5 g, Protein: 41 g, Fat: 5.5 g, Saturated Fat: 1 g, Cholesterol: 99.5 mg, Sodium: 590 mg, Fiber: 7.5 g, Sugar: 6 g



INSTRUCTIONS



HOW TO MAKE IT

1. Preheat the oven to 350F.
2. In a 3 quart or large pot, heat olive oil spray over medium. Add the poblano peppers and onion, cook occasionally until soft, about 5 minutes.
3. Add cumin and cook, stirring often until fragrant, about 2 minutes.
4. Add full can of beans with liquid, chicken broth, 1/2 teaspoon salt, bay leaf and chicken breast; raise the heat to medium-high, and bring to a boil then lower the heat to medium-low and simmer for 25 minutes.
5. While the soup is simmering, stack the tortillas on a cutting board and cut the stack in half, then into 1/2-inch wide strips.
6. Arrange the strips on a sheet pan in a single layer (you may need to use more than one pan, or bake in rounds) & spray with cooking oil. Season the strips with a few pinches of salt and bake until golden and crispy, about 10 minutes.
7. Remove chicken breast from pot, shred and reserve.
8. Pull 1 cup of the chili from the pot and blend. Return to the pot with the shredded chicken; add corn. Bring to a simmer & turn off the heat, adjust salt to taste.
9. To serve, top the chili with a handful of tortilla strips, cilantro, jalapeños and any other desired toppings.

FEATURED EXERCISE

https://www.self.com/gallery/3-simple-butt-exercises-you-can-do-right-before-bed?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=onsite-share&utm_brand=self&utm_social-type=earned

Featured Exercise ► Marching Glute Bridge With Leg

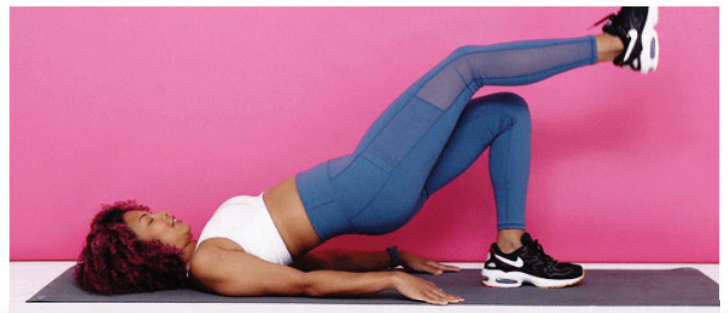
Extension exercise

HOW TO DO IT:

1. Lie face up on the floor or a mat with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. With your hands at your sides, your fingertips should come close to touching your heels, or be able to graze your heels. Engage your core to press your low back to the floor.
2. Lift your hips, squeezing your glutes at the top. Hold here and lift your right foot off the floor, extending your right leg straight.
3. Place your right foot back on the floor and without lowering your hips, immediately lift your left foot and repeat on the other side. Continue to march, alternating sides.

BENEFITS:

This variation of the glute bridge exercise not only strengthens your glutes but also engages your abs, hamstrings, and lower back muscles. It's no wonder that physical therapists and personal trainers alike recommend this 3-in-1 move for overall strength and stability.



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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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