

News Column for use week of January 8, 2024
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River Valley Extension District
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American Heart Month & Metabolic Syndrome

February is American Heart Month, an opportunity to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease and possibly even make a small change to better care for our hearts. The American Heart Association has a wonderful website, heart.org, where you can find information about a plethora of heart health topics, including diabetes, heart murmurs, sleep disorders, cholesterol, stroke, high blood pressure, the list goes on! Their site also includes fascinating animations that detail how exactly the heart works, what exactly happens when someone experiences a stroke or other heart health problem, or what a stent looks like. They also have a multitude of handouts in both English and Spanish to share with family, friends, or coworkers. They even have their own recipe webpage! One convenient place to look for heart-healthy recipes. I'd strongly encourage you to check out their website at some point this month. It is a wonderful resource.

This month I wanted to highlight the heart health topic of **Metabolic Syndrome**.

Metabolic syndrome is a group of five conditions that can lead to heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and other health problems. Metabolic syndrome is diagnosed when someone has three or more of these risk factors:

- High blood glucose (sugar)
- Low levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol in the blood
- High levels of triglycerides in the blood
- Large waist circumference or "apple-shaped" body
- High blood pressure

Although each of these is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease, when a person has three or more and is diagnosed with metabolic syndrome, the chance of developing a serious cardiovascular condition increases. For example, high blood pressure is an important risk factor for cardiovascular disease, but when combined with high fasting blood sugar levels and abdominal obesity (large waistline), the chance of developing cardiovascular disease is intensified.

Metabolic syndrome is a serious health condition that puts people at higher risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and diseases related to fatty buildups in artery walls (atherosclerosis). Underlying causes of metabolic syndrome include overweight and obesity, insulin resistance, physical inactivity, genetic factors, and increasing age.

Although metabolic syndrome is a serious condition, you can reduce your risks significantly by losing weight; increasing your physical activity; eating a heart-healthy diet that's rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and fish; and working with your health care team to monitor and manage your blood glucose, blood cholesterol and blood pressure.

If you have any questions about increasing your physical activity, eating a heart-healthy diet, or monitoring your blood pressure do not hesitate to reach out to me, Kaitlin Moore. I am the District's Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent. I offer a few programs that do address some of these topics, perhaps you've heard them advertised over the radio, or have read about them in local newspapers. A couple of these programs include Stay Strong Stay Healthy (also

offered by Jordan Schuette, our Adult Development and Aging Agent) and the Hypertension Awareness & Prevention Program. Keep your eyes and ears peeled for any information about future classes near you! If you have questions you can reach me at the Concordia office, 785-243-8185, or email me at kaitlimoore@ksu.edu.

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