

**Family Living
Focus**

by
Tioga Co.
Extension Agent

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Within our workplace four individuals have recently had medical problems with their heart. All of those people have suddenly realized that they have a health problem and need to do something about it, whether that be to take medication and/or to change some of their lifestyle practices. Their friends or family members will ask me about changes in diet, since I often do extension programs involving nutrition and health. Although I cannot give direct dietary advice, as that information should come only from a personal physician or registered dietitian, I can provide general information for developing a healthy lifestyle. Here are a few simple ways to get started:

CUT THE FAT IN YOUR DIET!

Examine your eating habits and find where those fatty food sources are. Begin to read food labels so that you can identify foods that are known to be high in fat. Fatty meats, dairy products, sauces, gravies, and fried foods are to be examined and then switch to lower fat choices such as lean meats, chicken, turkey, fish, and low-fat dairy products. Don't eliminate any food groups but find the lower fat choices within them. Substitute lower fat recipes. Change your method of cooking from frying to baking or broiling or just cook with less fat. Change to a lower fat spread for your bread and/or cut the amount you spread on it. Simple, small changes result in a large overall effect when cutting back on the fat! Less fat in your diet will help to prevent the build up of fatty deposits in your arteries which can cause heart problems.

GET UP AND GET MOVING!

Combine a low fat diet with more activity. First, be sure that you check any exercise regime with your personal physician. Increase your activity level gradually with changes such as parking your car further away from the workplace and walk, using the stairs rather than taking the elevator, walking to lunch, walking your dog, or asking a friend to join you for a leisurely walk and talk, window shopping in town or walking the mall, supermarket or large discount stores. Those extra steps will add more activity to your life,

strengthen your heart, and surprisingly give you more energy.

MANAGE YOUR STRESS!

If work, family problems or timeframes are getting to you, examine your life and find some ways to relieve the pressure. Do you have a hobby that you haven't pursued in quite a while? Schedule some free time and do it. What about relaxing to music? Find your favorite tape and listen to it on the way to town, or on the way back home to unwind and change your thinking. Call a friend or neighbor that will listen to your stresses and

offer positive suggestions. Get out in more social activities that are away from your work or home environment. How about a Saturday night square dance or line dancing for a change of pace? Have some fun with life! Put some laughter and humor into it and see if you don't feel less stressed. By unwinding and relieving the tension you will be putting less stress on your body and its muscles.

For more detailed information on nutrition, exercise and stress contact our local Cooperative Extension Office or use our computer data base Pen Pages.

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