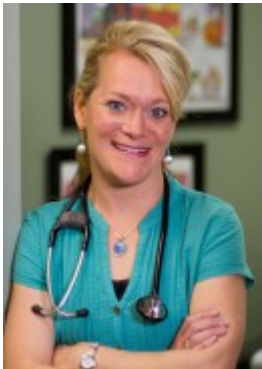


Heart TALK

Heart-healthy and Stroke-free Living with Dr. Amy L. Doneen, DNP, ARNP

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Holiday Thoughts from Dr. Amy

Dr. Amy Doneen, DNP, ARNP

The holiday season is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the blessings of family and friends, take a break from the pressures of work to relax and reconnect with loved ones, and reflect on our health goals for the coming year.

To honor this glorious time of relaxation and reflection, here is an inspiring quote from Helen Keller: “The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart. Wishing you happiness.”

As you consider your New Year’s resolutions, here are 12 holiday tips that will help enhance your cardiovascular wellness all year long:

1. Practice mindfulness daily. Studies show powerful benefits from this form of meditation that involves focusing on your breathing or the present moment as you calmly observe the thoughts that arise in your mind, then let them float away. Practicing mindfulness for 15 minutes a day can improve blood pressure, enhance blood sugar control if you have diabetes,

lower heart rate, and improve sleep.

2. Fight heart disease with fruits and vegetables. Avoid saturated fats and eat at least 3 servings of fiber-rich fruits and vegetables every day. A new [study of nearly one million people](#) found that on average, those who ate the most fiber lived longer due to lower risk for heart disease, diabetes, and several types of cancer. Other benefits include improved cholesterol levels, blood pressure, blood glucose and insulin, and possibly reduced inflammation.

3. Laugh every day! Watching funny movies or chuckling about humorous events in daily life has been linked to striking improvements in blood-vessel function. In fact, [researchers from University of Maryland School of Medicine report](#) that laughter benefits the endothelium (blood-vessel lining) as much as aerobic exercise or statin use. Sometimes called “the brain” of the arteries, the endothelium acts as a smart barrier between blood and the artery wall, serving as the first line of defense against plaque formation that could lead to a heart attack or stroke.

4. Step up your workout. At minimum, we recommend 22 minutes of cardiovascular (cardio) exercise daily—workouts that raise your heart rate, such as brisk walking, jogging, running, or dancing. One excellent way to motivate yourself to get your feet moving is to clip on a pedometer every morning. People who do so take up to 2,500 additional steps daily according to a recent analysis of 26 studies that included nearly 3,000 people. We also advise resistance

training at least 2 days per week, such as lifting weights. Along with toning your muscles, this exercise [has unique cardiovascular benefits](#), including lowering blood pressure and increasing blood flow to your arms and legs.

5. Rev up your brain. Like your body, your mind needs daily exercise to stay fit. A wide range of activities provide healthy stimulation: A [study of 700 older adults](#) found that those who spent the most time listening to the radio, reading the newspaper, going to museums and doing puzzles had a 47 percent lower rate of Alzheimer’s Disease than those who devoted the least time to these activities. Other brain boosters include learning a foreign language, taking courses at a community college, and playing games such as bridge, Scrabble or [Lumosity](#).

6. Take your medication as directed EACH DAY. If you forget to take your meds, they do not work! It’s also important to take them at the recommended time of day. For example, [a recent study](#) suggests that people who take blood pressure medications at night not only had better blood pressure control, but were also one-third less likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke or develop heart failure, compared to study participants who took the same medications in the morning. (*Continued on next page...*)

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Holiday Letter from Dr. Amy (continued)



7. Drink more water! Sipping more water can actually be life-saving: A [six-year study of more than 20,000 people](#) found that those who drank five or more glasses of water daily were about half as likely to suffer fatal cardiovascular events (like a heart attack or stroke) than those who drank two or fewer glasses. Avoid all soft drinks (both diet and regular) and other sugary beverages. Drinking one or two sweet drinks daily has been linked to a 26 percent higher risk for diabetes and a 35 percent rise in heart attack risk, [Harvard researchers reported](#) in September.

8. Go to your dentist regularly. Floss daily and use an ultrasonic toothbrush twice per day. Taking great care of your teeth helps prevent everything from heart attacks to stroke, colds, flu and diabetes. It could also add years to your life: A large [study of older adults](#) found that brushing every night, flossing daily, and seeing the dentist two or more times a year were significant predictors of longevity. Take your dental health to an even higher level by getting the [OralDNA test](#) for more accurate diagnosis of periodontal (gum) disease and if you have it, more effective treatment of oral bacteria that can also harm arterial health.

9. Remember that knowledge is power! Heart disease affects more than 80 million Americans. The good news is that with the right information and strategies, all heart attacks and strokes are preventable—even if heart disease runs in your family. Find out how to protect yourself—and your loved ones—by reading our book, [Beat the Heart Attack Gene: The Revolutionary Plan to Prevent Heart Disease, Stroke and Diabetes](#), now available in paperback and Kindle editions. It's a great gift to share with a friend. Find out why Dr. Daniel Amen says, "This book could save your life."

10. Follow a consistent sleep schedule. New [research](#) shows that "social jet lag"—following one sleep schedule on workdays and a different one on your days off, such as sleeping late on the weekend—can raise risk for both heart disease and diabetes. The effect is similar to the jet lag we experience after an airline flight across the country, say the researchers, with adverse effects on metabolism, especially blood sugar and insulin levels. We recommend at least six hours of shut-eye a night, with a consistent bed-time and wake-up time every day.

11. Gear up for a healthy 2016! Be prepared to work with Dr. Amy at your first quarter appointment to set your health goals for 2016 and get a personalized plan and science-backed strategies to help you achieve them. Remember—this is a partnership in health!

12. Track your progress and optimize cardiovascular wellness. Your quarterly visits are to review your lab results and learn how to live a life of optimal health. Our "fire panel" of inflammation tests act as an early warning to potential cardiovascular threats even when everything else seems fine. To further fine-tune your CV health assessment in 2016—and check for hidden health risks—we are now offering three new tests, which will be announced in the next issue of this newsletter.



Grilled Salmon with Cranberry-Orange Salsa



Ingredients

4 salmon filets, each 5 ounces
Freshly ground pepper, to taste
2 large oranges, peeled with white membranes removed
2 cups fresh cranberries
4 teaspoons grated orange peel
1/4 cup minced onion
1/4 cup olive oil
1 teaspoon minced fresh cilantro
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
1 fresh jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced

Salsa Instructions

Coarsely chop oranges and cranberries. Combine with all remaining ingredients in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Serve with grilled salmon and a fresh green salad or cooked vegetables of your choice.

Salmon Instructions

Preheat broiler or charcoal grill. Away from the heat source, lightly coat the grill rack or broiler pan with cooking spray. Season fish with pepper, then place filets on the prepared pan or grill, 4 to 6 inches from the heat source.

Grill over high heat until the edges turn white (3 to 4 minutes), then turn the fish and place on aluminum foil coated with cooking spray. Move to a cooler part of the grill or reduce heat. Grill until fish is opaque in the center when tested with a knife (about 4 minutes longer) and/or an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the fish reads 145 degrees.

Makes four servings. Adapted from recipes on the [Mayo Clinic](#) and [Wisconsin Cranberries](#) websites. Enjoy this sumptuous meal anytime!

Last Minute, Heart-Healthy Holiday Gifts

Even if you've left your holiday shopping to the last minute, these gifts will make everyone on your list rejoice, while also boosting their cardiovascular health.

Dark chocolate. Nibbling on dark chocolate can actually be potentially lifesaving! In [a recent study](#), people who ate the most dark chocolate (an average of about an ounce daily) were 39 percent less likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke, compared to those who ate the least chocolate.

Laughter. It's no joke: A good laugh expands blood vessels and boosts blood flow to the heart. Treat a friend or loved one to a comedy video or a gift certificate for a laughter yoga class, which combines deep yogic breathing and self-triggered mirth, leading to lower blood pressure and a merry mood.

Pedometer. A great stocking stuffer that contributes to fitness by providing additional motivation to take more steps every day.

Massage. A gift certificate for a massage will not only help the most stressed-out person on your gift list relax, but also [reduces](#)

[blood pressure](#) and risk for dangerous heart arrhythmias.

Music. A great gift, whether in the form of concert tickets or the new Adele CD, music literally does the heart good. Among its benefits are lower blood pressure and heart rate, reduced inflammation, and a decrease in anxiety that's the perfect antidote for holiday stress, [studies suggest](#).

Fresh fruit and vegetable basket. These colorful, tasty treats pack powerful cardiovascular benefits, with [a new study](#) reporting that people with the highest intake of fruits and vegetables are 26 percent less likely to have calcified plaque in their arteries.

Yoga mat. Danskin has a great [beginner's yoga set](#) with a portable nonslip mat and strap, an exercise ball, workout guide, and accompanying DVD. Yoga has a wide range of [benefits for heart health](#), including lower blood pressure.

A flowering plant. In a [Harvard study](#), people reported feeling happier after looking at fresh flowers in the morning—and even got a burst of energy that lasted all day.

