

# Women's Nutrition Matters Monthly

## Monthly Feature: Matters of the Heart

By Diane Lassen, RN, HHC

**A**S we trudge through yet another month of winter, we can delight in one of my favorite holidays, Valentine's Day. I just love all the hearts—and chocolate!-- that can be found everywhere this month. But I'd like to touch upon other matters of the heart this month, the first one being heart health.

I can sum it all up in one line: eat less, move more. Or, as Michael Poulin puts it, we need to eat less, mostly plants! I don't mean you need to become a vegetarian, although it is a very heart-healthy diet if done properly. What I do mean, is that we need to *reduce* our consumption of animal products in favor of more beans, grains and other plants.

As it is turning out, cholesterol is not the bad guy--inflammation is. In fact, the ever-popular and dangerous statin drugs actually work by reducing inflammation, not just cholesterol levels. We need cholesterol—it is a vital part of our nerves, and is needed to make all our hormones. Our body produces it for a reason! Cholesterol causes plaques in the arteries in response to an inflamed lining- it is trying to repair the potential leak! By lowering cholesterol, we are denying our bodies the materials it needs to function. Studies show that a very real side effect of taking statin drugs is a decrease in cognitive functioning because of the lack of cholesterol to build healthy nerve sheaths, not to mention liver damage and muscle pain.

Instead of resorting to drugs, we can protect our hearts by exercising daily for at least 30 minutes, and eating a diet rich in plant foods and low in saturated fats. Keep meat

portions small, and limit them to once a day. Use heart healthy fats such as raw nuts, avocado and flax seed and ditch the fried foods altogether. Keep alcohol to one small glass of wine a day, and please don't smoke! Come join my group on Tuesday nights to learn all about eating and being healthy—visit my [events page](#).

How we live and what we think has a lot to do with our heart health. Living in a stressed out mode every day causes the adrenals to wear out and insulin to become less effective. This leads to diabetes, a weakened immune system and chronic fatigue. Stress causes the nervous system to be in “fight or flight” mode, or sympathetic nervous system dominance. It causes our blood pressure to rise, and cortisol and insulin to store fat. Everyone knows that risk factors for heart disease include obesity and high blood pressure (much more than high cholesterol!) So along with a healthy diet and healthy exercise, we must learn to change the way we perceive stress. The easiest ways to do this is through your breathing, something I teach in my group sessions. The breath is so closely linked to our well being, that we can alter our blood pressure and circulating hormones simply by changing the way we breathe! If you want to try it, do this: the next time you feel that stressed-out feeling come upon you, stop for a moment and allow yourself to take a long, slow, deep breath into your belly. Hold it for a few seconds, and slowly release it. How does that feel? Your body will get the signal that you are not in an emergency situation, and will revert to parasympathetic nervous system dominance, giving you a feeling of calm. Practice this throughout your day, breathing always through your nose, and

feel the difference. Over time, your body will not become so fatigued by the end of the day, and your heart will be spared the constant agitation!

*Love Yourself Fully....*

## **WNM Updates**

### **Group Program:**

Starts this Tuesday, 7-8:30 at my home in Bethlehem Township. Call me today—there is still room for 2 more people! 908-377-0773. Cost is \$45 per 90 minute session.

### **Individual Counseling Sessions! \$95 for 90 minutes:**

Meet with me to discuss your health concerns and let me help you get on track with your goals. Price includes a full set of notes and recommendations!

### **Kitchen Cleanup! \$95 for 90 minutes:**

Confused about what is healthy food and what is not? Have questions about the safety of your cleaning products? Invite me into your kitchen, and I will help you to improve your choices, little by little, so that you and your family will gently improve the quality of foods you eat and the safety of your household environment. Includes a full set of notes and recommendations!



### **Individual Counseling Programs:**

Meet with me twice monthly for 6 months and let me teach you the skills for healthy living that you will have for a lifetime! No more dieting or binging or feeling guilty. Now try reducing stress, eating nourishing foods and practicing good self care. Are you ready for more energy, better sleep and more enjoyment out of food and life? Call me today!!

908-377-0773 or email [herbalmgem@gmail.com](mailto:herbalmgem@gmail.com)

**Check out my Web site:**

[www.womensnutritionmatters.com](http://www.womensnutritionmatters.com)

## **Diane's Monthly Message**

This is the time of the year we express our love, with flowers, candy and other gifts. But why limit it to just one day? Take the time to express your love and gratitude to all those special people and animals in your life. Write a love letter, or make a special dinner. Offer a back rub or foot massage—just because. Give hugs often this month, and recognize how good it feels to touch and be touched. It is something that is very missed in this fast-paced world today. Let's start a hug contest! How many hugs can you give this month? Start up a contest in your household and tally them on the refrigerator! And don't forget the pets! They need hugs, too!

## Chocolate Love—Chocolate Mousse!

2 ounces organic dark chocolate, chopped  
into small pieces

12.5 ounces silken tofu

1/3 cup organic cocoa powder

¼ cup boiling water

2/3 cup confectioner's sugar

1 tsp. vanilla extract

First, blend the tofu in your food processor until smooth. Set aside. In a bowl, add the chopped chocolate and the cocoa powder. Stir in the boiling water, and keep stirring until melted. Now stir in the confectioner's sugar, blending well. Stir in vanilla. (You can also experiment with additions like grated orange zest, instant espresso powder or almond extract.) Finally, stir all of this back into the food processor (with the tofu!) and blend well. Serve in bowls as is, or top with crushed graham crackers, berries or whatever you like!

## And The Last Word .....

Most of all, be sure to love yourself. Love all of you, even those parts you are not so proud of. In loving yourself, you are accepting yourself and this is always the first step in creating a healthier self! Sounds odd, but loving the things you don't like about yourself gives them less power over you. Makes you feel less guilt and shame. So pour on the love for YOU. You have so much to give to the world around you, start by nourishing yourself. Be well!

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. If you like what you see, please visit my website, [www.womensnutritionmatters.com](http://www.womensnutritionmatters.com) and check out my blog. Feel free to leave a comment there. And, if you know of someone who might benefit from this newsletter, please, by all means, pass it along. Tell them to sign up for their own copy, delivered free to their inbox every month!

Thank you again,  
Diane

Mail To:

**Name**  
**Street Address**  
**City, State and Zip Code**