

PURSUIT

FEBRUARY 2022

Florida Blue 
BetterYou 

A monthly wellness newsletter from Better You

Nitric Oxide and Heart Health

February is American Heart Month, a reminder for everyone to focus on cardiovascular health.

Your heart is a muscular pump that drives blood through your blood vessels. It is vital to your health and nearly everything that goes on in your body. Without the heart's pumping action, blood can't move throughout your body. Your blood carries oxygen and nutrients that your organs need to work well. To keep your heart and body healthy, you need to keep your blood vessels healthy, too.

Healthy blood vessels are soft and flexible to allow blood to flow effortlessly to all parts of the body. Often due to aging, or lifestyle choices like smoking or a poor diet, blood vessels lose their elasticity and become narrow and stiff. This increases your risk for a heart attack or stroke. One important substance that helps blood vessels stay healthy is nitric oxide. It's created throughout the body, but especially in blood vessels. When nitric oxide is released, blood vessels open wider, reducing blood pressure and allowing

oxygen and nutrient-rich blood to travel where needed in the body.

Physical activity and eating nitrate-rich foods improve heart health.

Physical activity makes your heart beat faster because your muscles need more oxygen when you exert yourself. This causes blood to move more quickly through your vessels and helps release nitric oxide into the blood stream, keeping blood vessels open, elastic, and slippery. This is especially important as we get older. Even for a person who has not been active, starting to move more every day can help your heart get healthier within a few months.

Eating foods high in nitrates, such as dark green vegetables, helps the body produce nitric oxide. These vegetables include celery, spinach, beets, arugula, broccoli, mustard greens, and bok choy. Other foods to eat include seafood, lean meat



and chicken, amaranth grain, pumpkin seeds, lentils, peas, tofu, soybeans and wild rice. They contain L-arginine, an amino acid that changes into nitric oxide. And foods high in antioxidants such as citrus fruit, carrots, and winter squash protect the nitric oxide in the blood stream from damage.

If you want a healthy heart, keep moving and eat your vegetables!

For more information about heart healthy living, [click here](#) to join us for a live webinar February 8, 2022 at 1:00 pm Eastern.

Resources: Prime Time Health, William Sears, MD, with Martha Sears, RN; WebMD.com; ahajournals.org; ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

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Caring for your Child's Teeth

As a parent it is important to care for your teeth and maintain good dental health, but when do you need to start with your child? The American Dental Association says that children should have their first dental visit by their first birthday. This early visit will help you discover problems early on and get your child used to visits so they have less fear about it when they get older. At this first visit your dentist will be able to evaluate what your child needs and get you the right course of action. Good oral health in children does not stop at the dentist. Here are a few tips and guidelines to help you care for your child's teeth.

Introduce good oral habits early on. Avoid cavities by teaching your child to brush at least twice per day and floss regularly.

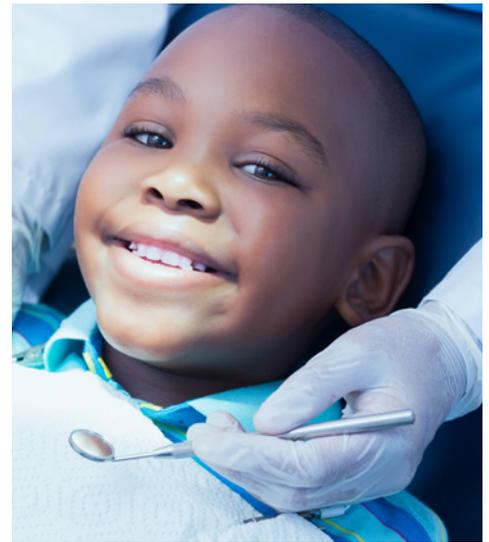
Start to use fluoride regularly. Fluoride works to toughen the enamel, making it harder for acid to make its way into the tooth. Talk with your dentist on what routine would work best for your child.

Limit and or eliminate some foods. Sugary foods, juices, and

candy (such as gummy candy, gummy vitamins or fruit roll-ups) are the most harmful to teeth which can wear down enamel and cause cavities. If your child does eat these kinds of foods, make sure they rinse their mouth or brush their teeth after to get rid of all the sugar in their mouth.

Encourage use of a mouth guard during sports. This can help to prevent any serious dental injuries.

Resource: KidsHealth.Org <https://kidshealth.org/>



Call the dentist if your child complains of tooth pain. It could mean they have a cavity that needs treatment.

As your child begins to get older routine checkups should begin anywhere from once every 3 months to once a year, depending on your dentist recommendations.

Mediterranean Lettuce Wraps (Serves 4)

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup tahini
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- ¼ cup lemon juice (from 2 lemons)
- 1 ½ teaspoons pure maple syrup
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 2 (15 ounce) cans no-salt-added chickpeas, rinsed
- ½ cup sliced jarred roasted red peppers, drained
- ½ cup thinly sliced shallots

- 12 large Bibb lettuce leaves
- ¼ cup toasted almonds, chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Directions

Whisk tahini, oil, lemon zest, lemon juice, maple syrup, salt and paprika in a large bowl. Add chickpeas, peppers and shallots. Toss to coat.

Divide the mixture among lettuce leaves (about 1/3 cup each). Top with almonds and parsley. Wrap the lettuce leaves around the filling and serve.



Recipe courtesy of Eatingwell.com; for nutritional information click [here](#).

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