



It seems as though every month there's something new to know about your heart. At times, it seems overwhelming. And according to the American Heart Association, cardiovascular disease is the number one cause of death in America. But all this doesn't have to be intimidating if you know the facts.

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# HEART MATTERS

## :: WHAT CAUSES HEART IRREGULARITY?

Cardiovascular disease comes in several forms. In one of the most common types, a weakened heart muscle no longer pumps blood effectively through the body. In another, a blood clot blocks an artery, severely reducing or stopping the flow of blood to the heart, which may lead to a heart attack.

Two major contributing factors to heart disease are high blood pressure and high cholesterol. High blood pressure makes the heart work harder to pump blood, straining the muscle and damaging the arteries. High cholesterol contributes to the deposit of plaque along the inner lining of the arteries. If it builds up to a thick layer, plaque can gradually reduce blood flow or even form a blood clot, which may lead to a heart attack or stroke.

## :: ARE YOU AT RISK?

The first step to prevent heart disease is knowing where you stand on these risk factors, says Dr. Alistair Fyfe, a Medical City cardiologist. “First, get a handle on high blood pressure and high cholesterol,” he says.

They’re easy to evaluate. Cholesterol is measured with a blood test, while blood pressure is tested with a simple procedure done at almost every doctor’s appointment. “It’s important to check blood pressure regularly,” says Dr. J. Edward Rosenthal, also a Medical City cardiologist. “You can have high blood pressure with no symptoms.”

If blood pressure and/or cholesterol are high, Dr. Fyfe recommends heart scans which

include advanced CT scans to see inside arteries and look for plaque buildup.

Dr. Fyfe also recommends evaluating yourself for other modifiable risk factors, which include smoking, obesity, a sedentary lifestyle and diabetes. The interaction of these factors contributes to a compound problem, since obesity can lead to diabetes. “Being overweight significantly increases your risk of developing diabetes,” says Dr. Fyfe.

## :: WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

In general, Americans eat too much and move too little, says Dr. Rosenthal. “There are very simple things you can do to increase your physical activity,” he says. “Avoid taking the elevator up a few flights. Get up and move around during the day. And make some regimented exercise part of your routine. Thirty minutes of exercise three times a week is a good rule of thumb.”

As for diet, the biggest problem is eating too much, he says. He doesn’t recommend one diet over another, because all diets that reduce the intake of calories work. “There is no magic diet. The main thing is willpower,” Dr. Rosenthal says.

Cigarette smoking is another risk factor for heart disease, says Dr. Rosenthal. “You need to stop smoking or, better yet, never start smoking in the first place.”

Middle-aged and older adults need to be proactive about monitoring their risk. Women need to pay particular attention to their heart health because the risk of sudden death for women is greater; in fact, cardiovascular disease is now the number one cause of death for females.

“Women have a unique situation because they may not develop chest

pain as a sign of a heart attack,” Dr. Fyfe says. Some of the symptoms they may experience include abdominal pain, breathing difficulty, nausea and unexplained fatigue.

Who needs to be concerned about heart disease? “Everyone,” Dr. Rosenthal says.

What should you do if you’ve been diagnosed with some form of cardiovascular disease?

Work closely with your doctor, and take advantage of the recent advancements in cardiovascular treatments, says Dr. Fyfe. “We have fantastic therapies available today including cholesterol and blood pressure medicines, clot busters, drug-eluting stents and minimally invasive surgery.”

Everyone else can take simple steps to prevent heart disease. “Take all things in moderation,” advises Dr. Rosenthal. “Don’t eat too much, don’t drink too much, don’t smoke and don’t avoid exercise. If everybody did that, we’d see less hospitalization for heart disease.”

And now that you know you’re working hard to keep your heart healthy, you can ignore the doomsday health headlines in magazines at the grocery store checkout counter.

## :: GO RED FOR WOMEN

Several organizations are working to increase awareness of heart disease among women. The American Heart Association has launched the Go Red for Women campaign, in which Medical City is the hospital sponsor in Dallas. The campaign provides tips and information for women on healthy eating, exercise and risk factor reduction, such as smoking cessation, weight maintenance, blood pressure control and blood cholesterol management. For more information, visit [www.medicalcityheart.com](http://www.medicalcityheart.com).



## Very Lemony Chicken

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 lb chicken breast, skinned and fat removed
- 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup fresh sliced lemon peel
- 3 tsp chopped fresh oregano (or 1 tsp dried oregano, crushed)
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp paprika
- black pepper to taste

**DIRECTIONS:** Place chicken in 13x9x2-inch glass baking dish. Mix lemon juice, vinegar, lemon peel, oregano and onions. Pour over chicken, cover and marinate in refrigerator several hours or overnight, turning occasionally. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika. Cover and bake at 325 degrees for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake 30 minutes more or until done.

### NUTRITION FACTS:

**Yields:** ..... four servings  
**Serving size:** one chicken breast with sauce  
**Calories per serving:** ..... 154  
**Total fat:** ..... 5 g  
**Saturated fat:** ..... 2 g  
**Cholesterol:** ..... 63 mg  
**Sodium:** ..... 202 mg

RECIPE COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL HEART, LUNG AND BLOOD INSTITUTE OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH.



For more information on how to obtain a Medical City Cardio Scan, call (972) 566-SCAN or visit [www.medicalcityimaging.com](http://www.medicalcityimaging.com).