

Healthy Eating, Active Living: It's good for the heart

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According to the American Medical Association, over 60 percent of Americans are physically inactive. But you can change that and be one of the 40 percent who is physically active. By being physically active you can reduce your risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases.

May is bike month in Bakersfield and this is just one way you can start getting healthy by getting active. To go on a bike ride the only equipment you need is a bicycle and a helmet for protection. This is an activity that you can do at any time or place — in your own neighborhood or on the bike trail. It can be a fun physical activity that the whole family participates in. By going for a bike ride, you can improve your strength and coordination and release stress.

Additionally, you will reap health benefits that can only be achieved through physical activity. Cycling for one hour can cause you to burn up to 300 calories. A 15-minute bike ride to and from work five days a week can burn off the equivalent of 11 pounds in a year.

Going for a bike ride on a regular basis can aide in keeping your heart and body healthy, but eating healthy is just as important. You can start by incorporating a sweet, juicy, bright red, popular berry fruit into your diet — the strawberry.

Strawberries are an excellent source of vitamin C and manganese, and they are a good source of dietary fiber and potassium. Its bright and luscious red color reveals its phyto-nutrient (plant compounds thought to have health protective qualities) and antioxidant power. Strawberries have shown to aide in the prevention of cancer, help promote a healthy heart, and contribute to an overall healthy diet. They are low in calories and fat, and are cholesterol free. They can be used in salads and desserts or eaten as is.

So give your heart a workout by taking a bike ride, then go home to try this light and easy salad dish.

Fresh strawberry spinach salad

- 12 ounces torn fresh spinach (about 10 Cups)
- 1/8 cup sliced green onion
- 3 cups fresh strawberries, halved or sliced
- 1 cup broken walnuts
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds, toasted (optional)

Citrus dressing

- 1/3 cup canola or olive oil
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice

In a large bowl, place torn spinach, strawberries and green onions. Cover and chill up to two hours. For citrus dressing, measure oil into a medium bowl and add lemon. Seal, shake well and chill. At serving time, shake citrus dressing again and pour over spinach, strawberry mixture. Top with walnuts and sesame seeds. Toss salad lightly to coat. Serve immediately.

Nutrition Facts: Makes 10 1-cup servings. One serving provides: 161 calories; 15 grams of fat; 1.5 grams saturated fat; 5 grams carbohydrate; 2.5 grams fiber; and 3 grams protein.

— *Brittany Lorimer is a registered dietitian for Clinica Sierra Vista. Healthy eating and active living articles will be published regularly and will feature locally grown crops. This article was brought to you by Get Moving Kern, a community coalition that was developed to promote the wellness of children and adults in Kern County by promoting healthy eating and active living. For more information, visit: www.getmovingkern.org*