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LIFE

Reduce Your Chances of Cardiovascular Disease During American Heart Month

Every February is designated as American Heart Month, which makes it a great time to review your health and reduce your chances of developing a cardiovascular disease. According to the American Heart Association, heart disease accounts for 1 in 3 deaths in the United States.

Many factors contribute to your heart's health, including your diet, blood pressure and cholesterol. Here are some tips you can use during American Heart Month to lower your risks of cardiovascular disease:

- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day, four or more times a week. Even if your first workouts are slow, you can increase the time and intensity as you progress.
- Get frequent medical checkups that include blood pressure and cholesterol tests. You can also talk to your primary care physician about medications that can improve your heart's health.
- Eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Also, try to avoid pre-prepared foods, saturated fats and trans fats.
- Avoid drinking excess amounts of caffeine and alcohol.
- Keep your stress levels low by practicing relaxation techniques and maintaining a healthy sleep schedule.
- Limit your sodium intake to 1,500 to 2,400 milligrams per day.

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HOME

Maintaining Your Chimney and Outdoor Vents

Lighting a fire can offer you and your family relaxation on a cold day. However, you also need to think how buildup in your home's outdoor vents can expose you to risks from carbon monoxide buildups and fires.

It isn't just fireplaces that require outdoor ventilation. Common appliances like furnaces, water heaters and even clothes dryers need a way to discard heat and pollutants. All of these outdoor vents function similarly, and need to be maintained regularly to keep your home safe.

Keep these precautions in mind when maintaining your home's chimney and outdoor vents:

- Make sure that all of your appliances use separate flues or ducts to prevent a buildup of carbon monoxide.
- Inspect the metal linings of your chimney and outdoor vents for cracks that could leak dangerous gases and other pollutants.
- Check your clothes dryer's vent for lint buildups that could present a fire hazard.
- Have your chimney inspected at least once a year to ensure it isn't damaged or blocked by a buildup of creosote, an oily residue that's highly combustible.
- If possible, inspect the upper opening of your chimney to see if it's blocked by debris like leaves or animal nests.
- Contact a certified specialist if you need to clean, repair or replace your chimney.

AUTO

Emergency Roadside Kits

Part of being a safe driver is preparing for any situation you could encounter on the road, but in a worst-case scenario, you need to ensure you have some essential equipment.

Emergency roadside kits should include all of the items you need to make a quick repair to your vehicle, perform first aid and protect yourself and passengers from the elements. Make sure to include these items in your kit:

- Jumper cables, road flares, a tire pressure gauge and tire inflator
- Antifreeze, washer fluid and an ice scraper
- A tool kit with a flathead screwdriver, pliers, wrench and vice grips
- A flashlight, radio and extra batteries
- A first-aid kit equipped with bandages, antiseptic wipes, pain relievers, gauze, adhesive tape, and instant ice and heat packs
- Nonperishable energy bars and bottled water
- Blankets and extra outwear, such as hats and gloves

IN THE KNOW

Choosing the Right Pair of Sunglasses

Sunglasses are an important part of protecting your vision. In fact, during the cold winter months your eyes are even more at risk due to the extra sunlight that's reflected by snow and ice.

Even a small amount sunlight will expose your eyes to dangerous UV rays that can lead to cataracts and eyelid cancer. That's why it's so important to wear a pair of sunglasses that offers you full protection:

- Only wear sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of UV radiation.
- Make sure that the lenses have a uniform tint.
- Keep a pair of sunglasses with a gray tint in your car for better color identification while driving.
- Test sunglasses before you buy them to ensure the frame holds the lenses close to your eyes and curves around your face to protect you from multiple angles.
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INSIGHTS