Successful Aging by Samantha Hoss

Gerontologists suggest that the wellbeing of individuals can be enhanced by participation in social and leisure activities. These activities can range from having dinner with family members to participating in a group fitness class. This idea is known as activity theory. Obviously, physical activity can promote a health benefits such as greater muscle tone and cardiovascular health but it can also promote mental health if these activities take place in a social setting. Studies show that social interactions may reduce stress, create a sense of belonging and establish or maintain interpersonal relationships. A literature review of 44 articles published between 1995 and 2009 found that informal social activity has the more evidence of an influence on wellbeing. These effects may increase an individual’s happiness and longevity which ultimately promotes successful aging.

Can you believe it’s December? It certainly has not felt like it, although the decorations in my home and the Christmas tunes on the radio seem to declare it to be so. After some much needed reflection time and hours spent with family over the Thanksgiving holiday, I’ve decided December should be approached with nothing less than a grateful heart. So as we enter the final month of the year, let me take this time to say a huge “Thank you!” to all of you, our amazing members, for who you are and all you’ve taught us these past few months. I personally have learned so much from you: your hard work and commitment to staying physically active, your joyous spirits, and your quick acceptance of me as your director, as well as your welcoming attitudes toward our students. I cannot thank each of you enough for making Adult Fitness what it is.

In addition, let’s all enjoy the last couple of weeks with our fall semester students. They have done a fabulous job, have worked hard, and have formed some great relationships here. So as we welcome our winter students at the end of the month, let’s not forget to thank our fall students and wish them well with their next endeavors.

~Brittni

What is “Holiday Heart Syndrome”?

Holiday Heart Syndrome is an onset of an acute irregular heart rhythm due to increased stress, alcohol consumption, and lack of exercise that most people experience around the holidays. This typically occurs in the atriums of the heart (upper chambers) and effects people who generally do not experience irregular heart rhythms (arrhythmias).

Are you at Risk for “Holiday Heart Syndrome”?

One of the main causes of Holiday Heart Syndrome is stress. Many people experience stress during the holidays because of long lines, gift shopping, anxiety about relatives, meal preparation, gaining weight, and many other factors. Alcohol may also contribute to this condition. People tend to consume much higher volumes of alcohol especially around Christmas and New Year’s. This leads to dehydration which is another cause of Holiday Heart Syndrome as well as a lack of exercise. Time is consumed with holiday preparation which leaves little time for exercise.

Symptoms, Prevention, and Treatment for Holiday Heart Syndrome

Symptoms of Holiday Heart Syndrome are often characterized by an irregular heart rhythm that may cause heart palpitations (pounding heart beat or skipped beats) or an increased heart rate. Other symptoms may include shortness of breath, chest discomfort, or dizziness. Symptoms will usually subside after the holiday season is complete but it is very important not to ignore these signs because they could ultimately result in a heart attack or be the underlying symptoms of existing heart disease.

Exercise Tips That May Help Prevent Holiday Heart Syndrome

During the holiday season time can be very limited which can reduce that amount of time we get to exercise. Instead of worrying about making it to the gym, here are a few tips that can help you get your exercise at home:

* Wake up an hour earlier than normal or use your lunch hour for a quick walk or jog
* Combine exercising with prior family commitments such as sledding, skiing, or snowshoeing
* Easy exercises that can be done at home may include pushups, crunches, squats, lunges, or pull-ups
* Organize your day the evening before to ensure enough time for exercise
* Be conscience of staying hydrated and control or maintain eating habits around the holidays

Sources:
- [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Seasonal-Heart-Healthy-Holiday-Foods_UCM_433897_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Seasonal-Heart-Healthy-Holiday-Foods_UCM_433897_Article.jsp)

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**Ingredients**

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 large green apples, peeled &amp; finely diced</td>
<td>(2.5 cups)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 cup water, divided</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 cups fresh cranberries</td>
<td>(10 oz.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 dried figs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juice plus zest of 1 orange</td>
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**Cranberry Balsamic Vinaigrette**

Simmer the apples with 1/4 cup of water over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until they become softened and completely unified as a sauce - about 15 minutes.

Reduce the heat to medium-low; stir in the cranberries and 3/4 cup of the water.

Simmer covered or partially covered until the cranberries all pop open and become soft, about 10 minutes.

While the cranberries simmer, finely dice the figs, removing any hard stem tips that may be intact. In a separate small saucepot, simmer the chopped figs over low heat in either the remaining 1/4 cup of water (or the orange juice if using), until soft, about 5 minutes. Stir the figs and the water into the cranberry and apple mixture, reduce the heat to low and allow the mixture to reduce while partially covered, so that more of the water cooks out and it becomes thicker, about 10-15 minutes.

Puree all ingredients in a food processor for 2-3 minutes while warm. Serve warm or chilled garnished with the orange zest if using.