

**SPECIAL
 POINTS OF
 INTEREST:**

- National Heart Month
- Chocolate: Good or Bad?
- Clothing & Textiles
- Balance
- Healthy Brownies Recipe

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RANDALL COUNTY

FAMILY FOCUS

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February is American Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women, but heart disease is preventable and controllable.

Every journey begins with one step, whether it's climbing a mountain or preventing heart disease.

Heart disease is a major problem. Every year, about 715,000 Americans have a heart attack. About 600,000 people die from heart disease in the United States each year—that's 1 out of every 4 deaths. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women.

The term "heart disease" refers to several types of heart conditions. The most common type in the United States is coronary heart disease (also called coronary artery disease), which occurs when a substance called plaque builds up in the arteries that supply blood to the heart. Coronary heart disease can cause heart attack, angina, heart failure, and arrhythmias.

Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease and

stroke, costs the United States \$312.6 billion each year. This total includes the cost of health care services, medications, and lost productivity. These conditions also are leading causes of disability, preventing Americans from working and enjoying family activities.

The situation is alarming, but there is good news—heart disease is preventable and controllable. We can start by taking small steps every day to bring our loved ones and ourselves closer to heart health.

One Step at a Time

As you begin your journey to better heart health, keep these things in mind:

- **Don't become overwhelmed.** Every step brings you closer to a healthier heart.
- **Don't go it alone.** The journey is more fun when you have company. Ask friends and family to join you.
- **Don't get discouraged.** You may not be able to take all of the steps at one time. Get a good night's sleep and do what you can tomorrow.

- **Reward yourself.** Find fun things to do to decrease your stress. Round up some colleagues for a lunchtime walk, join a singing group, or have a healthy dinner with your family or friends.

Plan for Prevention

Some health conditions and lifestyle factors can put people at a higher risk for developing heart disease. You can help prevent heart disease by making healthy choices and managing any medical conditions you may have.

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise regularly.
- Monitor your blood pressure.
- Don't smoke.
- Limit alcohol use.
- Have your cholesterol checked.
- Manage your diabetes. (If you have diabetes)
- Take your medicine.

Here's to a heart healthy 2014!

Reference: <http://www.cdc.gov/features/heartmonth/>



Valentine's Day is a time when people show feelings of love, affection and friendship. It is celebrated in many ways worldwide and falls on February 14 each year.

More than 36 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolate will be sold for Valentine's Day.

So, does that mean chocolate be good for you?



Resource: <http://my.clevelandclinic.org/heart/prevention/nutrition/food-choices/benefits-of-chocolate.aspx>

Valentine's Day: For the Love of Chocolate

A little chocolate, in moderation, may be beneficial, especially to your heart

Chocolate has gotten a lot of media coverage in recent years because it's believed that it may help protect your cardiovascular system. The reasoning being that the cocoa bean is rich in a class of plant nutrients called flavonoids.

Flavonoids help protect plants from environmental toxins and help repair damage. They can be found in a variety of foods, such as fruits and vegetables. When we eat foods rich in flavonoids, it appears that we also benefit from this "antioxidant" power.

Antioxidants are believed to help the body's cells resist damage caused by free radicals that are formed by normal bodily processes, such as breathing, and from environmental contaminants, like cigarette smoke. If your body does not have enough antioxidants to combat the amount of oxidation that occurs, it can become damaged by free radicals. For example, an increase in oxidation can cause low-density lipoprotein (LDL), also known as "bad" cholesterol, to form plaque on the artery walls.

Flavanols are the main type of flavonoid found in cocoa and chocolate. In addition to having antioxidant qualities, research shows that flavanols have other potential influences on vascular health, such as lowering blood pressure, improving blood flow to the brain and heart, and making blood platelets less sticky and able to clot.

These plant chemicals aren't only found in chocolate. In fact, a wide variety of foods and beverages are rich in flavonols. These include cranberries, apples, peanuts, onions, tea and red wine.

Are all types of chocolate healthy?

Before you grab a chocolate candy bar or slice of chocolate cake, it's important to understand that not all forms of chocolate contain high levels of flavanols.

Cocoa naturally has a very strong, pungent taste, which comes from the flavanols. When cocoa is processed into your favorite chocolate products, it goes through several steps to reduce this taste. The more chocolate is processed (through things like fermentation, alkalizing, roasting, etc.), the more flavanols are lost.

Most commercial chocolates are highly processed. Although it was once believed that dark chocolate contained the highest levels flavanols, recent research indicates that, depending on how the dark chocolate was processed, this may not be true. The good news is that most major chocolate manufacturers are looking for ways to keep the flavanols in their processed chocolates. But for now, your best choices are likely dark chocolate over milk chocolate (especially milk chocolate that is loaded with other fats and sugars) and cocoa powder that has not undergone Dutch processing (cocoa that is treated with an alkali to neutralize its natural acidity).

What about all of the fat in chocolate?

You may be surprised to learn that chocolate isn't as bad for you as once believed.

The fat in chocolate comes from cocoa butter and is made up of equal amounts of oleic acid (a heart-healthy monounsaturated fat also found in olive oil), stearic and palmitic acids. Stearic and palmitic acids are forms of saturated fat. You may know that saturated fats are linked to increases in LDL cholesterol and the risk of heart disease.

But, research shows that stearic acid appears to have a neutral effect on cholesterol, neither raising nor lowering it. Although palmitic acid does affect cholesterol levels, it only makes up one-third of the fat calories in chocolate. Still, this does not mean you can eat all the dark chocolate you'd like.

First, be careful about the type of dark chocolate you choose: chewy caramel-marshmallow-nut-covered dark chocolate is by no means a heart-healthy food option. Watch out for those extra ingredients that can add lots of extra fat and calories. Second, there is currently no established serving size of chocolate to help you reap the cardiovascular benefits it may offer, and more research is needed in this area. However, we do know that you no longer need to feel guilty if you enjoy a small piece of dark chocolate once in a while.

So, for now, enjoy moderate portions of chocolate (e.g., 1 ounce) a few times per week, and don't forget to eat other flavonoid-rich foods like apples, red wine, tea, onions and cranberries.

4-H Clothing & Textiles Project

YOUTH: WHAT IS THE 4-H CLOTHING & TEXTILES PROJECT?

The clothing and textiles project allows youth the opportunity to make a style of their own, be creative in sewing and designing, use basic sewing skills, develop good consumer skills when making and purchasing clothes, and serve the community by using skills learned in this project. It also focuses on helping young people gain a positive self-concept and be able to confidently put themselves out into the world.

Some activities youth can participate in if involved in the Clothing and Textiles project include: Sewing/Constructing an

outfit, Buying (learning consumer skills), Trashion Show (recycle/reuse a garment), Fashion Storyboard and the Quilt Challenge.

If you know of any youth who may be interested in the 4-H Clothing & Textiles project, please have them contact the Randall County Extension Office at 468.5543 and ask for Jackie Farrell or email jrfarrell@ag.tamu.edu. We will be forming meeting times and activities soon!

VOLUNTEERS:

We are always looking for great volunteers to share their talents too! If you love sewing, consumer decision making or designing, please let us know.

4-H Leaders are a valuable resource and help provide structured learning experiences for youth enrolled in the Clothing & Textiles project. The clothing and textiles project is a 3-4 month project. If you have questions and want to know more, please contact Jackie Farrell at 468.5543 or email jrfarrell@ag.tamu.edu



A Matter of Balance

A Matter of Balance is a class designed for those who have concerns about falling. Sessions will help you view falls as controllable, make lifestyle changes to reduce falls and increase strength and balance with exercise.

During the eight two-hour sessions participants learn to:

- View falls as controllable
- Set goals for increasing activity
- Change environment to reduce fall risk factors
- Promote exercise to increase strength and balance
- What to do if you should fall

Join Jackie Farrell and Jelaine Workman of Interim Healthcare for an informational meeting. We will be going over what will be discussed in the classes, planning class dates and completing paperwork. There is no charge for this class. Join us at the Amarillo Senior Center, 1220 S. Polk St., Amarillo on March 4th at 9:30 a.m.

Randall County Family Focus is a Family and Consumer Sciences information resource for Canyon and Amarillo area families.

The newsletter is published monthly.

Readers are encouraged to read the newsletter and then pass it on. Any information may be reproduced for education purposes in any form and credit cited appropriately.

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Triple Chocolate Surprise Brownies

Ingredients

- 1 cup black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 tablespoons light olive oil
- 1/2 cup thawed and squeezed dry frozen spinach
- 1/4 cup applesauce
- 2 eggs
- 1 egg yolk
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
- 1 1/2 tablespoons instant espresso powder
- 3 ounces chopped bittersweet chocolate
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup flour

- 1/3 cup mini chocolate chips
- 1/3 cup chopped pecans

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350°. Put black beans, olive oil, spinach, applesauce, eggs, egg yolk, sugar, cocoa, and espresso powder in a food processor; pulse for 1 minute or until smooth. Microwave bittersweet chocolate and butter in a glass bowl, stirring every 30 seconds or until smooth; cool for 5 minutes. Add chocolate, vanilla extract, and salt to processor; pulse to blend. Transfer to a bowl. Stir in flour and mini chocolate chips. Pour into an oiled 9 - x 13-inch pan; top with chopped pecans. Bake for 25-30 minutes; cool for 15 minutes.

Source: www.health.com

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

Upcoming Dates:

All classes and workshops held at Randall County Extension unless otherwise noted

Sat., January 25th—Cooking with Friends
(both sessions full)

Mon., January 27th—Step Up & Scale Down Class—
12:15—12:45 p.m.

Monday, January 27th— 4-H Clothing & Textiles Planning
Meeting 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 28th—Cooking with Friends
6:00—9:00 p.m.

Monday, February 24th—Texas Extension Association
Cultural Arts Day 11:00 a.m.

Saturday, March 2nd—Spring/Easter Deco Mesh Wreath
Workshop 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 4th—A Matter of Balance Planning
Meeting—*Amarillo Senior Center*—9:30 a.m.

Thursday, March 6th—Spring/Easter Deco Mesh Wreath
Workshop 6:30 p.m.