

# 5 ways to tell your heart, 'I love you'

*You can love your heart, not just during heart month, but all year long. Let's count the ways with Lori Daniels, MD, cardiologist at the University of California, San Diego Medical Center. She offers 5 easy ways, especially for people with heart disease, to love their hearts throughout the year.*

## 1. One crème brulee = 5 miles.

Research shows a direct link between obesity and increased heart disease. One way to keep your weight down is to reduce the number of calories you take in and increase the number of calories you burn. So before diving into a crème brulee or double chocolate sundae, find out how many calories the dessert contains. Then determine how many miles you would need to walk to burn the calories off. On average, 100 calories are burned walking 1 mile. Is one dessert worth a 3-mile trek? You decide.

**2. Laminate.** Keep an up-to-date list of medications and doctors' contact info in your bag and car glove compartment. In an emergency, this will serve as a quick and easy reference for family and medical personnel. Be sure to share this list with friends and family before traveling in case you need to fill a prescription or get medical attention.

**3. One aspirin, crushed.** Keep a supply of aspirin handy. If you have heart disease, you may already be taking some form of aspirin every day at any time you choose. If you or a friend believes you are suffering the onset of a heart attack, take either 1 adult or 2 baby aspirin. Instead of swallowing the pill whole, crush it first so that the aspirin is more rapidly absorbed into your body.

**4. Avoid salt of all colors.** You may be able to greatly lower your blood pressure by reducing the sodium (salt) in your diet. Be aware that white table salt is just one form of sodium in your kitchen. Other culprits with high sodium content come in black (soy and teriyaki sauce), yellow (mustard), pink (lunch meats) and brown (canned soups and gravies.) Check the sodium

content before eating a processed product. If you dramatically reduce your intake of sodium, you might, under your doctor's care, be able to stop taking some blood pressure medications.

## 5. Sunday night, count them

**out.** Whether you take blood pressure medicine, cholesterol drugs or any other prescription or supplement, try this. Instead of managing many pill bottles, manage one pill box. Almost every pharmacy sells pill boxes marked with the days of the week. Every Sunday night, fill up one week's worth of pills. Reduce the time you spend counting your prescriptions to 4 times a month instead of 30. And you'll be able to keep track of whether you took your medicine each day.

