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A NEW YEAR, A NEW 12 TIPS FOR A HEART SMART START TO THE NEW YEAR

GREENSBURG, PA, January 1, 2012 ... Happy 2012! With a new year comes new hope, new goals and of course a new you. This year is all about a healthy heart. "Taking care of your heart should be a priority since cardiovascular disease is our nation's No. 1 killer", according to Dawn Davoli, RD, LDN, nutrition consultant for Excela Health. The path to a healthier lifestyle begins one little habit at a time. "Small changes can yield big results". Read on to learn some simple resolutions and fun advice from Davoli for staying heart healthy throughout the New Year.

1. **Know your numbers.** Ask your doctor about what are considered normal numbers for your blood pressure, cholesterol and triglycerides. Also good to know is your BMI, waist circumference and fasting blood glucose. "This will give you a good baseline and where improvements need to be made".
2. **Shake the salt habit.** Too much sodium in the diet is linked to high blood pressure. If you lower your blood pressure, you can lower your risk of heart disease and stroke. Try flavoring foods with herbs and spices, avoid obvious salty foods and read food labels choosing products with lower sodium levels.
3. **Go fishing.** Eat more fish, especially those high in omega-3 fatty acids, a type of polyunsaturated fat. Research shows that omega-3s provide protection against heart disease. Remember this acronym and try "HAS MOST T"...herring, anchovies, sardines, mackerel, oysters, salmon, trout, and tuna.

4. **Have your chocolate.** When dark chocolate is included in a healthy diet, it can help improve overall heart health. The power of chocolate comes from flavonoids, a phytochemical found in the cacao bean, from which cocoa is taken. So the more cocoa a chocolate contains, the richer the chocolate's health-promoting content. Dark chocolate contains a higher percentage of cocoa than white or milk chocolate. "One ounce (roughly six Hershey's Kisses) is all you need to enjoy the benefits of dark chocolate without widening the waistline," according to Davoli.
5. **Get moving.** Walking for just 20 to 30 minutes a few days a week can reduce the risk of premature death by more than 50 percent. Join Excelsa Health's new Mall Walkers program at the Westmoreland Mall! Kick off date is Thursday, January 26 from 8 to 9:15 a.m. at the Food Court. For more info and to register, go to excelsahealth.org/wellness&community/mallwalkers.
6. **Eat more fruits and vegetables.** This piece of advice never seems to go away ... and for good reason. Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that help fight heart disease. This year, try adding these power produce picks: artichokes, avocados, berries (blue, cran, black, rasp), kale, kiwi, pomegranates, prunes, pumpkins and mushrooms.
7. **Use good fats.** Swap out plaque promoting saturated fats (found in butter, high fat dairy products, meat and coconut milk) with healthier mono and polyunsaturated fats (found in vegetable oils, fish, nuts and nut butters, seeds and avocados). Trans fats, which are often the product of the process that turns liquid fats solid for use in processed foods, should be avoided.
8. **Be a quitter.** Smokers have a higher risk of developing many chronic disorders, including atherosclerosis, the buildup of fatty substances in the arteries, which can lead to coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke. Call the Excelsa Health Call Center, 1-877-771-1234, for information on tobacco cessation programs.
9. **Reap the benefits of whole grains.** Eating more whole grains is an easy way to make your diet healthier. They are packed with nutrients including protein, fiber, B vitamins, antioxidants, and trace minerals (iron, zinc, copper, and

magnesium). A diet rich in whole grains has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease. Try whole grain corn, oats, brown rice, barley, buckwheat and quinoa.

10. **Cook simply and colorfully.** Get back to basics and dust off your old cookbook. Simple cooking techniques like grilling, roasting, broiling, sautéing and baking is the new trend. Add colorful foods and your canvas is complete. “A simple dinner of grilled salmon with sautéed kale over quinoa is not only heart healthy and colorful, but is a nutritionist’s dream plate,” says Davoli.
11. **Taste makes waist.** Weight management is important, but pay more attention to your waistline than your weight. The waistline is a better measurement of overall health than weight because the amount of fat around your waist is directly linked to high blood pressure and high cholesterol and can increase your risk of diabetes. Stay below 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men.
12. **Smile.** A recent study suggests that optimistic people have a significantly reduced risk of stroke. Staying positive helps prevent heart disease, in addition to boosting your mood, immunity and longevity. Fifteen minutes of laughter equals about 30 minutes of aerobic exercise in terms of cardiovascular health. So ... say ... ”cheese”... low-fat cheese, that is!