

# Achieve

A Newsletter  
for AvMed  
Members

## ▶ YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE WITH CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE

### Why staying on top of dental care can help your heart

AvMed Medical Director Joby Kolsun shares his insight on the importance of oral health.

**By Joby Kolsun, D.O.**

**O**ral care is often overlooked as a part of chronic disease management. But your dentist is an important part of your care team.

A growing body of research is finding links between oral health and physical health. Your mouth is home to billions of bacteria, some good and some bad. A healthy mouth can fight off the bad bacteria. But when you have gum disease, an infection, or another problem in your mouth, you're less able to fight off those germs.

That bacteria can cause infections and inflammation that contribute to heart disease, clogged arteries, and even stroke. Tooth loss in particular has a significant link to heart disease: The more teeth you lose, the higher your risk.

If you have one or more chronic conditions, dentist visits are even more important. Regular cleanings will help keep

your teeth and gums healthy. And your dentist can check for early signs of gum disease or other problems that could make your condition worse.

#### Oral health checklist

- Brush your teeth twice a day for two minutes.
- Floss every day.
- Visit the dentist twice a year for a cleaning and exam.
- Cut back on sugary foods and drinks.



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## How to measure your blood pressure at home

Checking your blood pressure at home is an important way to manage hypertension. It can let you know if medications and lifestyle changes are working. And it can help you catch problems early, when they're easier to treat.

Here are some tips to help you get the most accurate reading at home.

### Choose the right monitor

Wrist monitors are not always accurate, says Martha Gulati, M.D., cardiologist at Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute. As a matter of fact, the American Heart Association advises against them because readings tend to be higher. Instead,



Dr. Gulati recommends a cuff-based monitor. Digital cuffs are easy to use and accurate. Some can even connect to a smartphone app and keep a record of all your readings.

### Follow these steps for a better reading

Take the measurements at the same time every day, usually in the morning and again in the evening

Avoid food, caffeine, tobacco, alcohol, and black licorice for at least 30 minutes before

measuring. These can raise your blood pressure. And go to the bathroom first. A full bladder can raise blood pressure slightly.

Sit up straight in a chair with both feet on the floor. Relax for five minutes.

Rest your arm on a table so your upper arm is level with your heart. Wrap the cuff around your bare arm, above the bend in your elbow. Stay still and quiet. Moving or talking can skew your results.

Take three readings, each about a minute apart. Record the average of all three readings with the time and date.

### We're here for you

Your Case Manager can connect you to the resources you need. Just call **1-833-609-0735**.



## Healthy Eating Made Simple

Elizabeth Ferrer, R.D., AvMed's Registered Dietitian, shares her favorite tips for happier, healthier meals — without feeling deprived.

## Stay on track this holiday season

The holidays are all about enjoying friends, family ... and delicious food! But if you're managing a health condition or have dietary restrictions, the buffet table may feel more like a minefield. Still, you can indulge in seasonal favorites without sacrificing your health. Here are a few tips.

### Avoid mindless grazing

People tend to gather around the food at parties. But when you're chatting, you may not even realize how much you're eating. Cut down on mindless eating by moving conversations away from the snacks.

### Be smart about sweets

Sweets aren't off the table,

but be mindful of how much you have. If there are several things you want to try, have just one or two bites of a few



different things (maybe find a friend to split portions with). Or, if you have your eye on something special, have a whole portion of just that.

### Bring your own dish

If you have specific dietary restrictions, bring your own dish that meets your

needs. The host and the rest of the party will appreciate an extra dish, and you know there will be at least one thing there that you can eat without worry. (Looking for ideas? Try the recipe on the next page. It's a lighter version of a sweet potato casserole.)

### Go easy on the drinks

Alcoholic (or non-alcoholic) drinks can be loaded with calories and sugar, on top of all the other treats

you're enjoying. Choose low-calorie options like light beer or wine or use sugar-free mixers like seltzer or diet soda. And stick to just one or two drinks.

### Don't come hungry

It's tempting to "save your calories" by skipping meals or eating light before going to a party. But if you're overly hungry when you get to the party, you're more likely to overeat. And it will be harder to resist cravings for salt, sugar, and fat.



## Recipe



### Roasted Sweet Potato with cinnamon almond butter sauce

Serves: 4 | Prep time: 10 minutes  
Cook time: 30 minutes

#### Ingredients

2 large sweet potatoes, cut into small cubes  
2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil  
½ tsp. garlic powder  
¼ tsp. salt  
2 Tbsp. natural creamy almond butter  
1 Tbsp. warm water  
1 tsp. cinnamon powder

#### Nutrition facts (per serving):

Calories: 190 calories | Fat: 11 g (saturated fat: 1 g) |  
Cholesterol: 0 mg | Sodium: 180 mg | Carbs: 20 g | Fiber: 4 g |  
Sugar: 6 g (added sugar: 0 g) | Protein: 4 g

#### Directions

Preheat oven to 425° F.  
Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Add the sweet potatoes and toss with olive oil, garlic powder, and salt. Bake for 15 minutes, stir, and return to the oven for 15 minutes.

While the potatoes are roasting, make the sauce: Add the almond butter and water to a small bowl and microwave for 10-15 seconds. Mix in the cinnamon powder. If needed, add more warm water a teaspoon at a time until it's thin enough to drizzle. Drizzle sauce over roasted sweet potatoes and serve.