

## Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease

Heart disease describes a range of diseases that affect the heart. The term “heart disease” is often referred to as “cardiovascular disease” and vice versa. Cardiovascular disease generally refers to conditions that involve narrowed or blocked blood vessels that can lead to a heart attack, chest pain or stroke. Making a few healthy habits can decrease the risk of heart disease.

### Maintain a Healthy Weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight can greatly impact your overall health. Since weight gain is linked to higher blood cholesterol, blood pressure and risk of diabetes, determining your body-mass index (BMI) can help you decide if you need to lose or maintain your weight. Focus on eating a healthy diet and increasing physical activity to lose extra weight.

### Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet

Eating a heart-healthy diet can reduce your risk for heart disease. Eating more fiber helps reduce cholesterol and manage weight. Fiber-rich foods include fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans /legumes. Choose healthy fats from avocados, nuts, seeds, salmon, tuna and olive oil. Limit or avoid unhealthy fats (saturated and trans fats) from animal meat, dairy products, fried foods, processed foods and packaged baked goods. Salt, or sodium, can raise your blood pressure. Reduce your intake by flavoring foods with spices and herbs, buying fresh or frozen whole foods rather than canned and limit convenience foods.

### Get Moving

Regular physical activity can help control cholesterol, blood pressure and maintain a healthy weight. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity 5 days a week and/or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week for health benefits. Find an activity that you enjoy.

### Stop Smoking

Cigarette smokers have a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Speak with your physician to understand what method may be the best for you to quit your habit. It may be helpful to find smoking cessation programs in your area or on the internet. Many hospitals, public health departments, telephone hotlines and employers offer tobacco cessation program that provides support from trained professionals to help you create healthy non-smoking habits.

### Manage Stress

Stress can have many health implications, especially for heart health. Creating new healthy habits can help you cope with stress. Some coping strategies include: engaging in regular physical activity, self-acceptance, forming and maintaining healthy relationships, talking with a therapist, staying organized and getting enough sleep.

## Know Your Numbers

High cholesterol, high blood pressure and uncontrolled blood sugars are all associated with increased risk for heart disease. Have your values checked with your physician on a regular basis.

## Resources

- American Heart Association: [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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