



HEART



heart strong

**Your heart is your hardest working muscle.
How do you keep it strong?**

Many of us exercise to keep our muscles strong. But what do you do to keep the hardest working muscle in your body, your heart, strong? Keeping your heart healthy is central to overall good health. You are never too old or too young to begin taking good care of your heart. Taking small steps to follow a healthy lifestyle at any age can help prevent heart disease, and lower your risk for a heart attack or stroke.

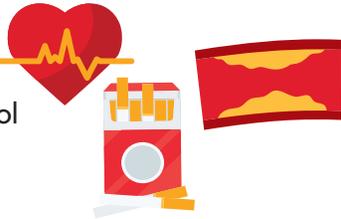
Lovelace
Women's Hospital

Although some heart disease risk factors like family history can't be controlled, there are simple lifestyle changes you can make to improve your heart health.

Conditions that lead to heart disease may begin early in life, but there are many steps you can take to protect your heart health. Start by knowing your risk factors. Some, like family history or being over age 45, are beyond your control, but there are risk factors that you can do something about.

Nearly half of all Americans have at least one of these three risk factors:

- 1 High blood pressure
- 2 High blood cholesterol
- 3 Smoking



Other medical conditions and lifestyle choices can also put people at a higher risk for heart disease, including:

- Diabetes
- Overweight and obesity
- Unhealthy diet
- Physical inactivity
- Excessive alcohol use

Habits for a Healthy Heart

You Are What You Eat

A healthy diet is one of the best ways to avoid heart disease. Your heart and overall health will benefit if you follow these nutritional guidelines:

- Include a variety of fruits and vegetables
- Eat fiber-rich whole grains
- Choose low-fat dairy products
- Eat lean meats and at least two servings per week of fish high in omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, trout, herring)
- Limit sodium to less than 1,500 mg a day
- Watch fat and sugar intake
- Drink alcohol only in moderation
- Watch portion sizes

Get Moving

A regular exercise program helps to decrease your resting heart rate and boost good cholesterol. Aim to get 30 minutes of exercise a day. Walking is a great way to get started, because it's easy to do, inexpensive and available everywhere with no gear required. Small changes in exercise can have a big impact on cardiac wellness.

Keep Your Weight in Check

Your risk of heart disease and stroke lowers if you reach and maintain a healthy weight. Discuss your weight with your healthcare provider to make sure you are in the healthy range and determine which steps you can take to lose weight if you need to.

Sleep on It

Making sure you get a good night's sleep (at least seven hours per night) is another small step with big payoffs for heart health. Not getting enough sleep puts you at a higher risk for heart disease.

Treat Stress and Mental Health Problems

Keep stress in check by taking time each day to relax and unwind. Get help if you have trouble coping because of depression, anxiety, or other health problems.

DANGER SIGNALS

Chest pain is the most common symptom of a heart attack for men and women, but women often describe the sensation as pressure, tightness or an ache. Research also shows that less typical heart attack symptoms like back pain, nausea or fatigue are more common for women.

If you experience any of the following symptoms of a heart attack, call 911. Faster treatment means less damage to the heart muscle and better odds of a full recovery.

- ! Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest
- ! Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, back, neck, jaw, stomach, or shoulder
- ! Shortness of breath (with or without chest discomfort)
- ! Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

Know Your Numbers for Optimal Heart Health

Talk to your healthcare provider to learn your key health numbers to keep your heart strong and healthy.

HEALTH FACTOR GOALS

Total cholesterol <200 mg/dL

LDL "bad" cholesterol <100 mg/dL

HDL "good" cholesterol >50 mg/dL

Triglycerides <150 mg/dL

Blood pressure <120/80

Fasting glucose 60-100 mg/dL

Body mass index <25

Waist circumference <35"/women | <40"/men

ACTION ITEMS

DO ONE THING: Take small steps to make your heart stronger, and know your numbers for optimal heart health.

SHARED DECISION MAKING: Talk to your healthcare provider about your personal heart disease risk factors, and discuss what you can do to keep your heart strong.

