

Heart Disease Prevention

Heart disease decreases the quality of life of millions of Americans and is the leading cause of death for both men and women. Most heart disease is related to the way we live. Changing to a healthier lifestyle helps prevent heart problems. If you already have heart disease, in many cases a healthier lifestyle can prevent worsening of heart problems.

Heart disease develops over many years, but it can start when you are in your 20s or 30s. As you get older, you are more likely to have heart problems resulting from years of unhealthy habits. It's very important to take care of your health and reduce your risk for heart disease as you get older.

A family history of heart disease increases your risk for heart disease. If members of your family have had heart disease, it is especially important for you to try to lower other risk factors. While you can't change your family history, there are 6 risk factors for heart disease that you can control.

Take control.

Make sure you are checked for these 3 of the 6 risk factors that can be treated:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- High blood sugar level (diabetes)

Once you know if you have 1 or more of these risk factors, you can work with your healthcare providers to get healthier and decrease your risk for heart problems.

The other 3 risk factors that you can control also require commitment and ongoing effort to lower your risk:

- Being overweight
- Smoking
- Not getting enough physical activity

Talk to your healthcare provider about medical treatments and support programs that can help you stop smoking or lose weight. If you are overweight, being more active and losing even just 5 to 10% of your weight can lower your blood pressure, your blood sugar, and your cholesterol.

Enjoy the benefits of more exercise.

Regular exercise can help you control your weight. It can also improve your health and your sense of well-being by:

- Improving blood flow
- Helping keep blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and blood sugar at normal levels
- Keeping muscles in tone
- Improving your mood and emotional health
- Improving sleep quality

- Helping bones stay strong

Exercise works in 2 ways to help you burn more calories:

- You burn more calories while you are exercising and for several hours afterward.
- As you tone your muscles, you increase the amount of calories the muscles burn.

Exercise that increases your breathing and heart rate (aerobic exercise) is very important for keeping your heart and lungs working well.

Depending on your level of fitness, you may need to start very slowly. Maybe your healthcare provider will recommend no more than 5 minutes of walking or exercycling to start. But then you may be able to add a minute every day or two until you've worked up to 20 or 30 minutes a day.

Try to work up to at least 10 minutes of moderate exercise at a time and spread your total workout time over the week. For example, you might do 30-minute workouts, 5 times a week. A good exercise goal is to build up to at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate aerobic exercise every week, or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) a week of vigorous activity. You might combine moderate and vigorous activity for a fun workout.

- **Moderate exercise** means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat. At a moderate level of exercise you'll be able to talk, but not sing. Examples of moderate exercise are walking fast, doing water aerobics, or playing doubles tennis.
- **Vigorous activity** means you are breathing hard and fast, and your heart rate has gone up quite a bit. If you're working at this level, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Examples of activities that require vigorous effort are jogging, swimming laps, or playing singles tennis.

If you have not been exercising, check with your healthcare provider and ask for an exercise prescription.

If you smoke, try to quit.

Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to quit smoking. Stopping smoking has benefits you will enjoy almost immediately, and the benefits will last a lifetime, including:

- Your senses of smell and taste will come back.
- It will be easier to breathe, especially with exertion and exercise.
- Your gums and teeth will be healthier.
- Your smoker's cough will go away.
- Your risk of heart attack, stroke, and certain cancers will be much lower.

Eat healthy.

Learn a few basics about nutrition and choose healthy foods so your body can get the nutrients it needs. A heart-healthy diet includes:

- All the green and yellow vegetables you can eat--raw, steamed, or baked
- Unsweetened fruits--fresh, frozen, or cooked
- Whole grains--like whole wheat, oats, brown rice, and quinoa--for fiber and protein
- Protein from plants, low-fat dairy products, fish, and lean meats
- Limit the fat and added sugar in your diet.
 - Fat should be no more than 20 to 35% of your total calories and most of it should be polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fat. These fats are healthier than saturated fat or trans fat. Healthy fats can be found in foods such as fish, avocados, vegetable oils, nuts, and seeds.
 - Sugar or syrup that is added to food during processing, cooking, or at the table should be no more than:
 - 100 calories (6 teaspoons) a day for women
 - 150 calories (10 teaspoons) a day for men

Sugary drinks, like soda pop, should be limited to no more than 36 ounces or 450 calories per week.

Lower stress.

Lowering stress can help you have normal blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol. Enjoy your personal relationships. Let yourself take time out for the things you enjoy. Hobbies can be helpful, as are social groups, whether for religious gatherings, exercise, playing cards, or whatever interests you. Physical exercise, meditation, massage, and relaxation exercises can also help lower stress.

Take small steps toward a healthy lifestyle.

If you decide you need to make changes in the way you live, you probably won't be able to turn your life around all at once. Remember, what's good for you is also good for your family members or friends. For example, a heart-healthy diet is good for everyone. Try to have healthier habits that fit well with your lifestyle goals. If you do, you will greatly decrease your chances of heart disease and other health problems, such as stroke and diabetes.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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Calculating Your Health Risk Using Your Body Mass Index

1. Find your body mass index (BMI) on the chart below. Your body mass index uses your height and weight to estimate how much fat is on your body. Find your height on the left. Then find your weight on the row at the top. Your BMI is the number on the chart at the intersection between your height and weight.

Weight	105	110	115	120	125	130	135	140	145	150	155	160	165	170	175	180	185	190	195	200	205	210	215	
Height																								
5'0"	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	
5'1"	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40		
5'2"	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39			
5'3"	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38			
5'4"	18	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37			
5'5"	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37			
5'6"	17	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36			
5'7"	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36			
5'8"	16	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35			
5'9"	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35			
5'10"	15	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34			
5'11"	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34			
6'0"	14	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33			
6'1"	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33			
6'2"	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33			
6'3"	13	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32			
6'4"	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32			

2. Measure your waist size.
3. Use your BMI and waist size to determine your health risk on the chart below.

BMI	Waist size	
	35 inches or less (women) 40 inches or less (men)	More than 35 inches (women) More than 40 inches (men)
<18	Underweight	
18.5 to 24.9	Healthy Weight	
25 to 29.9	Overweight	High risk
30 to 34.9	Obese	Very high risk
35 to 39.9	Obese	Very high risk
40 or more	Extremely Obese	Extremely high risk

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