

MIND YOUR HEALTH

SEMINARS



A healthy lifestyle is the best defense against heart disease and other cardiovascular problems, including stroke.

HEART HEALTHY LIVING

The beat goes on

Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) is the most common form of heart disease and the leading cause of death in the U.S. for both men and women. It occurs when the coronary arteries that supply blood and oxygen to the heart become narrowed and hardened due to a buildup of plaque. As plaque thickens, blood flow is reduced and may cause symptoms such as chest discomfort (angina) or shortness of breath. When blood flow is completely stopped, usually due to a blood clot, a heart attack can occur.

Determining Your Risks for CAD

The American Heart Association has identified the following risk factors that contribute to CAD:

Uncontrollable: Risk Factors You Cannot Change

- Increasing age:** risk for CAD rises significantly around middle age for both men (mid-40s) and women (age of menopause)
- Gender:** men are at a greater risk for a heart attack, especially earlier in life
- Family history:** father or brother diagnosed with CAD before age 55; or mother or sister diagnosed before age 65

Controllable: Risk Factors You Can Modify

- High blood pressure (hypertension):** increases risk by quietly damaging the heart and blood vessels over time
- Unhealthy blood cholesterol:** LDL (bad) cholesterol that is too high and/or HDL (good) cholesterol that is too low
- Tobacco use:** includes cigarettes, cigars, pipes and second-hand exposure to tobacco smoke
- Physical inactivity:** a sedentary lifestyle also leads to other CAD risk factors
- Obesity and overweight:** especially extra weight around the waist
- Diabetes:** the risk is greater if blood sugar is not well controlled

Contributing: Risk Factors You Can Modify

- Stress:** how you respond to stress can affect other risk factors (e.g., overeating, putting off exercise, smoking or excess drinking when under stress)
- Excess alcohol:** drinking too much, including binge drinking, can lead to high blood pressure, heart failure, stroke and other serious problems.

The more risk factors you have (and the greater the level of each risk factor), the greater your chance of developing CAD.

Lifestyle for a Healthy Heart

Fortunately, most risk factors are responsive to lifestyle changes. Here's what you can do:

Control Blood Pressure

A healthy blood pressure for adults is less than 120/80 mm Hg (less than 120 AND less than 80). Blood pressure goals may vary based on other risk factors and health conditions. Talk to your doctor about your specific goal.

To help control blood pressure:

- Lose weight if you need to; as little as 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can help.
- Be physically active most days of the week.
- Follow a healthy eating plan, such as DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension).
- Decrease your intake of sodium (salt).
- Limit or avoid alcohol.
- Don't use tobacco.
- Manage stress and anger.
- Take blood pressure medication, if prescribed.

Keep Cholesterol Levels in Check

The standard lipid profile test measures total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol and triglycerides (a form of blood fat).

What are Your Numbers?

	Your Numbers	Healthy Levels
Blood pressure:	_____ / _____	<120 / <80 mm Hg
Total cholesterol:	_____	<200 mg/dL
LDL (bad) cholesterol:	_____	<130 mg/dL*
HDL (good) cholesterol:	_____	≥ 40 mg/dL for men ≥ 50 mg/dL for women
Triglycerides:	_____	<150 mg/dL

*Cholesterol (especially LDL) goals may vary based on other risk factors. Discuss your optimal levels with your doctor.

There are two main ways to improve cholesterol levels:

1. Practice a healthy lifestyle: exercise regularly, eat a heart-healthy diet, manage weight and don't smoke.
2. Take cholesterol lowering medication, if prescribed.

Avoid All Tobacco Products

Did you know that when a smoker quits:

- Within two weeks to three months, the chance of having a heart attack decreases
- At one year, excess risk of CAD risk is cut to half that of a smoker
- At 15 years, CAD risk is similar to someone who has never smoked

Quitting isn't easy; the key is being committed and finding helpful resources. Talk to your doctor about ways to help you quit.

Be Physically Active

Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week. For example, go for a 30-minute brisk walk, five days a week. Moderate intensity means that your heart rate and breathing are noticeably increased, but you don't feel overly winded and talking is comfortable. When you don't have 30 minutes, two 15-minute sessions or three 10-minute sessions can offer the same benefits.

The best activities are the ones you enjoy most and that get you moving. Walking, jogging, hiking, swimming, cycling, dancing, rowing and group exercise classes are just a few good examples.

Maintain a Healthy Weight and Waist Size

If you are overweight, even a small weight loss (5 to 10 percent of body weight) can decrease the risk of heart disease. For someone who weighs 200 pounds, losing 10 to 20 pounds can make a positive impact. Regular exercise, sensible eating and effective stress management will help you reach and maintain a healthy weight—and waistline.

Excess abdominal fat increases your risk for CAD and type 2 diabetes. This is true even if you're not much overweight. Measure your waist to determine your risk. Your goal is:

- Less than 40 inches (men)
- Less than 35 inches (women)



If you are a beginning exerciser or it has been a while since you've been active, check with your doctor before you get started, especially if you have a chronic condition such as diabetes, heart disease or asthma.

Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet

Choose:

- Mostly plant-based foods, including a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, legumes and seeds
- Healthy fats such as olive, canola, soybean and peanut oils; avocado; trans fat-free soft spreads; nut butters
- Fish at least twice a week, especially oily fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids like salmon, mackerel, tuna, trout and sardines
- Lean meats, skinless poultry breast and vegetable meat alternatives
- Nonfat, 1% or low-fat dairy products
- To flavor foods with herbs and spices instead of salt
- To follow the DASH, MyPlate or Mediterranean Eating Plan
- To read food labels for information on serving size, calories, fats, sodium and fiber

Cut back on...

- Foods containing partially hydrogenated oils (including certain commercial baked goods and snacks, fried foods and stick margarine) to reduce trans fats in your diet
- Table salt and processed, convenience and fast foods already high in sodium
- Sugary beverages and foods with added sugars
- Solid fats and foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol, such as full-fat milk and cheeses, butter, fatty meats, shortening and lard
- Portion sizes. Serving yourself a little less than normal is an easy way to cut back on fat, sugar, sodium and calories; eating too much of even healthful foods can lead to weight gain

Prevent Diabetes

Research studies indicate you can delay and even prevent type 2 diabetes. It requires a healthy eating plan, regular physical activity, weight loss and sometimes medication.

If you have diabetes, good blood sugar control, regular monitoring and regular visits with your doctor or diabetes educator are also important for heart-healthy living.

Manage Stress

Improving how you handle stress can benefit your heart health and overall quality of life. Here are some suggestions:

- Learn and practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation or visualization.
- Learn how to manage your time better.
- Go for a relaxing walk, practice yoga or take a Tai Chi class.
- Set realistic expectations about what you can accomplish or achieve.

Limit Alcohol

Some studies suggest light to moderate alcohol consumption can be good for the heart. This means an average of one to two drinks per day for men (no more than 14 drinks per week) and one drink per day for women (no more than 7 drinks per week). More than this amount is considered risky drinking.

A standard drink is:

- 5 ounces of wine
- 12 ounces of beer
- 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor

If you don't currently drink, it's recommended that you DO NOT start.

What is one step you will take towards helping to reduce your risk for developing heart disease? Write it down here (include more than one if you'd like):

Additional Resources

You can learn more about preventing heart disease and other cardiovascular conditions from the following organizations:

- American Heart Association, www.heart.org
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health
- Cleveland Clinic, www.clevelandclinic.org/heart
- The National Women's Health Information Center, www.womenshealth.gov/heart-health-stroke/