

Lifestyle changes to combat heart disease

HEALTHY EATING, EXERCISE, QUITTING SMOKING, MANAGING STRESS

— they can all have a profound impact on combating heart disease. Making all of these a priority may seem overwhelming. But every small positive step you take can help improve your health.



Following a healthy diet — what does that mean?

To lower your risk of heart disease and heart attack, you and your family should follow a diet that is:

- **Low in saturated and trans fats.** Saturated fats are found in some meats, dairy products, chocolate, baked goods, and deep-fried and processed foods. Trans fats can be found in fried and processed foods. Both types of fat raise your low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or “bad,” cholesterol level.
- **High in omega-3 fatty acids.** Found in fish, nut oils such as olive oil and some seafood and plants, omega-3 fatty acids lower your risk of heart attack, in part by helping prevent blood clots.
- **High in fiber.** Fiber is found in whole grains, fruits and vegetables. A fiber-rich diet not only helps lower your LDL cholesterol level, but also provides nutrients that may help protect against heart disease.
- **Low in salt and sugar.** A low-salt diet can help you manage your blood pressure. A low-sugar diet can help you prevent weight gain and control diabetes and pre-diabetes.

Losing **5 to 10%**
of your current weight
can lower your risk of
heart disease.

Being active doesn't have to mean being an Olympian

You can benefit from as little as 60 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week. For major health benefits, every week adults should do at least:

- 150 minutes of aerobic activity
- Two total body strength training workouts

If you smoke, you know you need to stop

Smoking can raise your risk of heart disease and heart attack, and it affects every cell in your body. If you can't stop on your own, talk with your doctor about programs and products that can help you quit, or seek out support groups.

Managing stress can mean managing risk

Unmanaged stress can affect your health. It may cause high blood pressure, irregular heart rhythms, damage to your arteries, higher cholesterol levels, and the development and progression of coronary artery disease. Physical activity, medicine and relaxation therapy can help relieve stress.

A few small steps can have a great big impact on your health — so start now!



Sources:
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