

Ten Tips for Heart Health

Exercise. Just 30 minutes a day, five days a week, of aerobic activity can significantly lower your risk of stroke, heart attack and adult-onset diabetes.

Eat healthy. High-fiber, high-protein and low-sodium foods help to reduce cholesterol and blood pressure, both of which contribute to heart disease. Many cardiologists recommend following diets that focus on healthy oils, lean meats and lots of fruit and vegetables such as the Mediterranean Diet or the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) Diet.

Enjoy fish often. A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded that consuming eight ounces of fish weekly could cut your risk of stroke in half.

Lose weight if you need to. Being 30 lbs. over your ideal weight dramatically increases your chances of having heart disease, as well as diabetes, gallbladder problems and some forms of arthritis.

Do not smoke! If you quit, blood vessels and coronary tissues will respond fairly quickly, and your risk of heart disease will drop accordingly.

Get screened for heart disease. The American Heart Association recommends routine screenings for people as young as 20 if they have significant risk factors or a strong family history and for most people beginning at age 40. Screenings can detect early stages of plaque buildup, but through diet, exercise and medication, you can reduce the plaque – and maybe even reverse it. Check with your doctor to determine how frequently you should schedule a screening.

Minimize stress. Exercising, meditating, maintaining a positive attitude and talking through issues to avoid repetition of stress are all great ways to help alleviate the stress in your life and reduce your risk for heart attack and stroke.

Control your blood pressure. Monitor your blood pressure with regular doctor visits and try the National Institutes of Health's DASH Diet. It is rich in fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy foods, and low in total and saturated fat.

Control your cholesterol. Unfortunately, high cholesterol has no symptoms, and only your doctor can provide a diagnosis. If you do have high cholesterol, it is important that you maintain your medication schedule – reducing cholesterol can significantly lower your risk of heart disease.

Prevent and manage diabetes. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for people with diabetes. Talk with your doctor about your risk and lifestyle changes you can make to reduce risk and avoid this disease.

