

Journey to Wellness — A free self-guided healthy living program

Reduce your risk of heart disease



According to the American Heart Association, **heart disease is the No. 1 cause of death** in the U.S. While you can't change your risk factors, like family history, sex or age, there are several ways **you can reduce your risk** of heart disease.

Reduce your risk of heart disease

Do not smoke or use tobacco

Your risk of heart disease will drop if you quit using tobacco even if you have used it for a long time. Be sure to avoid secondhand smoke, too. Chemicals in tobacco can damage the heart and blood vessels.

Get movement throughout the day

Physical activity helps control your weight and reduces the chances of developing other conditions that may put a strain on the heart, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and Type 2 diabetes.

Eat a heart-healthy diet

A healthy diet can help protect the heart, improve blood pressure and cholesterol, and reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes. A heart-healthy eating plan includes:

- Eating vegetables and fruits; beans or other legumes; lean meats and fish; low-fat or fat-free dairy foods; whole grains; and healthy fats, such as olive oil.
- Limiting your intake of salt, sugar, processed carbohydrates, alcohol, saturated fat (found in red meat and full-fat dairy products) and trans fat (found in fried fast food, chips, baked goods).

Maintain a healthy weight

Being overweight increases your risk of heart disease. Excess weight can lead to conditions that increase the chances of developing heart disease, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and Type 2 diabetes.

Get sleep

People who don't get enough sleep have a higher risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes and depression. Most adults need at least seven hours of sleep each night. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same times each day.

Manage stress

Some people overeat, drink or smoke to cope with stress. Find healthier ways to manage stress, such as physical activity, relaxation exercises or meditation.

Know your numbers

Regular screenings can tell you what your numbers are and if you need to take action. Regularly screen for blood pressure, cholesterol levels and blood sugar.

Information adapted from [mayoclinic.org: Strategies to prevent heart disease](https://www.mayoclinic.org/Strategies-to-prevent-heart-disease)

[mayoclinichealthsystem.org/journey](https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/journey)



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MC4770-10rev0823