



Love Your Heart

Simple steps to protect your heart and lower your risk of heart disease

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THE BASICS

Why Heart Health Matters

Cardiovascular diseases, including heart attacks and strokes, are the leading cause of death worldwide according to the World Health Organization. The good news is that a large share of cases can be prevented.

Your heart pumps blood through a network of vessels to deliver oxygen and nutrients to every organ. Over time, factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking and diabetes can damage blood vessels and narrow arteries, making the heart work harder and raising the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Main risk factors

**High blood pressure**

Often has no symptoms, which is why regular checks are important.

**High cholesterol**

Fatty deposits can build up inside the arteries.

**Smoking**

Damages blood vessels and sharply raises risk.

**Diabetes and excess weight**

Raise strain on the heart and blood vessels.

**Inactivity**

Too little movement weakens heart fitness.

**Unhealthy diet**

Too much salt, sugar, and processed or fatty food.

Many heart conditions develop silently for years. Prevention starts long before symptoms appear.

PREVENTION

Six Ways to Protect Your Heart

Everyday choices have a powerful effect on your cardiovascular health. You do not need to change everything at once.

**Move regularly**

Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity per week, such as brisk walking or cycling.

**Eat heart-friendly food**

Choose vegetables, fruit, whole grains, fish, nuts and olive oil. Limit processed meat and sugary drinks.

**Cut down on salt**

The WHO recommends less than 5 grams of salt (about one teaspoon) per day.

**Do not smoke**

Quitting at any age lowers risk, and support and medicines can help.

**Manage stress**

Rest, social contact, time in nature and relaxation techniques support heart health.

**Sleep well**

Regular poor sleep is linked with higher blood pressure and heart disease risk.

Know your numbers

- Blood pressure: a healthy reading is generally below about 120/80 mmHg, and doctors usually advise action when it stays at or above 130/80 or 140/90 depending on local guidelines
- Cholesterol and blood sugar: ask your doctor how often to check, especially after age 40 or if you have risk factors
- Waist size and weight: a healthy range lowers the strain on your heart

ACT FAST

Warning Signs: Do Not Wait

Quick action during a heart attack or stroke can save life and limit damage. Learn the signs, and call your local emergency number immediately if you notice them.

Possible heart attack signs

- Pressure, tightness or pain in the chest that may last more than a few minutes
- Pain spreading to the arm, shoulder, neck, jaw or back
- Shortness of breath, cold sweat, nausea or light-headedness
- Women, older adults and people with diabetes may have milder or less typical symptoms

Possible stroke signs (think FAST)

- Face drooping on one side
- Arm weakness, or inability to lift both arms
- Speech difficulty or confusion
- Time to call the emergency number right away

Do not drive yourself to hospital if you suspect a heart attack or stroke. Call for an ambulance, stay calm and sit down while you wait. If advised by a doctor, follow their instructions about medicines such as aspirin and do not take any on your own initiative without medical advice.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Your Heart Health Checklist

Heart disease is largely preventable. Start with small steps and build them into habits.

This week, try to

- Walk briskly for 30 minutes on most days
- Add vegetables or fruit to every meal
- Use less salt and fewer processed foods
- Check your blood pressure
- Book a routine check-up if you have not had one recently

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