

Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease

There is a direct link between lifestyle and the risk of developing heart disease. By eliminating or reducing your risks, you lower your chances of developing heart disease.



What places you at risk for heart disease?

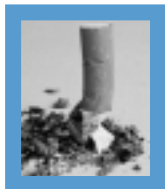
Things You Cannot Change

Age – Increasing age increases risk for heart disease.

Gender – Males run a higher risk than women until women reach menopause; then the risk becomes equal.

Genetics – Family history of early heart disease (first-degree relative before age 50).

Things That You Can Change



Smoking

Smoking damages the lining of your arteries and also narrows your arteries, which raises blood pressure and decreases blood flow to your heart.

High Cholesterol

High levels of cholesterol, in particular LDL cholesterol, can lead to a buildup of fatty deposits called plaque in your arteries. LDL cholesterol also damages the lining of these blood vessels.

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure increases the pressure against the walls of arteries, thereby damaging the lining of these vessels.

Excess Weight

Excess weight makes your heart work harder, possibly leading to some damage to the vessel lining.

Lack of Physical Activity

Your heart is a muscle that is strengthened by physical activity.

Stress

Stress increases your blood pressure and releases chemicals that can damage the lining of the blood vessels.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a condition in which the sugar in your blood (glucose) is too high. Over time, this high sugar can damage the lining of the arteries.

What can you do to prevent heart disease?

Talk to your doctor about which changes would be best for you to focus on first.

Eat a healthy diet

Limit foods high in fat and saturated fat, such as animal and dairy products, and eat more servings of high-fiber foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole-grain breads and cereals, and beans (such as lentils, kidney beans, and black beans).

Consume less than 200mg of cholesterol a day and limit fat to 30% or less of your calories.

Also, watch your salt intake.

Get regular exercise

Work up to exercising at least three-four times per week for 30 minutes at a time. Choose activities that you enjoy. Remember always to check with your doctor before starting any exercise routine.

Quit smoking

Smoking is the most important of the known modifiable risk factors for coronary heart disease in the United States. Ask your doctor for help on quitting.

Lose weight as recommended by your doctor

Losing as few as 10-20 pounds can improve blood pressure, LDL cholesterol, and control of diabetes.

Take medications exactly as prescribed

Medications work only if you take them as prescribed. Talk to your doctor if you have any concerns about the medications you are currently taking.

Manage stress

You can't always control the things in life that cause stress, but you can choose how you react to them and that's the key. Stress can be defined as any change in your life. There are many books and resources available to help you.

Manage diabetes

Remember, if you have diabetes it is important to follow your doctor's advice on your care and treatment. Keeping your diabetes under control is necessary to reduce the risk for developing future heart problems.

This material is not intended as medical advice. Please talk to your doctor about this and any other health information.