

An Essential Guide to **Heart Health**

The Importance of the Human
Heart and How to Care For It



ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this report may be modified or altered in any form whatsoever, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any informational storage or retrieval system without express written, dated and signed permission from the author.

AFFILIATE DISCLAIMER. The short, direct, non-legal version is this: Some of the links in this report may be affiliate links which means that I earn money if you choose to buy from that vendor at some point in the near future. I do not choose which products and services to promote based upon which pay me the most, I choose based upon my decision of which I would recommend to a dear friend. You will never pay more for an item by clicking through my affiliate link, and, in fact, may pay less since I negotiate special offers for my readers that are not available elsewhere.

DISCLAIMER AND/OR LEGAL NOTICES: The information presented herein represents the view of the author as of the date of publication. Because of the rate with which conditions change, the author reserves the right to alter and update his opinion based on the new conditions. The report is for informational purposes only. While every attempt has been made to verify the information provided in this report, neither the author nor his affiliates/partners assume any responsibility for errors, inaccuracies or omissions. Any slights of people or organizations are unintentional. If advice concerning legal or related matters is needed, the services of a fully qualified professional should be sought. This report is not intended for use as a source of legal or accounting advice. You should be aware of any laws which govern business transactions or other business practices in your country and state. Any reference to any person or business whether living or dead is purely coincidental.

Copyright ©

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
A Closer Look at the Human Heart	7
What is the Heart?	7
Parts of the Heart	8
What is Blood Pressure?	9
Fun Facts About the Heart	9
Common Heart Conditions	11
Coronary Heart Disease	12
Angina	13
Heart Attack	15
Heart Failure	17
Arrhythmia	19
High Blood Pressure	21
Congenital Heart Defects	24
Inherited Heart Conditions	27
Sudden Cardiac Arrest	28
High Cholesterol	30
Heart Murmur	32
How to Care For Your Heart	34
Heart Healthy Foods	35
Lose Weight	37
How to Lower Cholesterol	39
How to Lower Blood Pressure	40
Increase Exercise and Activity	41
Avoid Smoking and Limit Alcohol Consumption	42
Lower Stress	43
Have Regular Checkups	45
How to Maintain a Healthy Diet, Stick to an Exercise Plan, and Lose Weight	49
Tools That Can Help Record Heart Activity	54
Keeping the Heart Healthy Starts With A Healthy Lifestyle	56
Resources	58

Introduction

The heart is an important part of the circulatory system, and it's responsible for pumping blood and oxygen throughout the entire body.

Take a moment to get in tune with your heart by placing two fingers against your neck just below your jawline. You can also try placing two fingers on your wrist, just below the base of the thumb. That bump bump feeling is your heart in action. It's working hard to keep you alive and supply blood and oxygen to all the necessary areas in the body.

You can tell a lot from a heartbeat, including:

- The beating of a human heart can indicate if a person is healthy or not.
- It can also tell if you've recently exercised, experienced something alarming, or spotted a romantic

interest across the room.

- The heart can even be used to detect lies, because the heart begins to beat faster when a person feels stressed or uncomfortable.

The heart is an incredible organ that works hard every day. **The adult heart beats between 86,000 and 144,000 times each day.** Children tend to have a faster pulse than adults which means their hearts tend to beat between 100,000 and 158,000 times a day.

A healthy heart is exceedingly beneficial to the human body, but an unhealthy heart can cause numerous health issues. In fact, the CDC states that heart disease is the “leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States.”

Some people are born with heart conditions, while others develop them over time. For some, heart issues are an unavoidable reality. For many others, **the risk of heart**

disease can be significantly lowered with a healthy lifestyle.

In this eBook, you'll learn more about the human heart, what it is, and how it works. You'll also learn helpful tips to keep your heart healthy, so it can keep doing the important job it was made to do.



A Closer Look at the Human Heart

The human heart serves an essential function in the body, but what is it and how does it work? What is unique about the heart and why is it so important to maintain a healthy heart? This section will give you a better understanding of the marvel that is the human heart.

What is the Heart?

The human heart is a muscular organ in the circulatory system that supplies oxygen and nutrients (in the blood) to tissues in the body. It is also responsible for removing carbon dioxides and other waste as it circulates in and out of the heart.

The heart rests at the center of the body, slightly left of center. The adult human heart weighs between 8 and 12 ounces. Men's hearts tend to weigh a bit more than women.

Parts of the Heart

The human heart has four chambers:

- Right ventricle
- Left ventricle
- Right atrium
- Left atrium

The bottom chambers: The right and left ventricles are responsible for pumping blood out of the heart. The right ventricle receives blood from the right atrium, and then sends that blood to the lungs where it can be filled with oxygen. The left ventricle, the strongest chamber in the heart, pumps the oxygen-rich blood back into the body.

The top chambers: The right and left atrium are responsible for receiving blood entering the heart. The right atrium receives blood from the veins and then sends it on to the right ventricle. The left atrium receives oxygenated blood from the lungs and passes it on to the left ventricle.

What is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure refers to the force used to pump blood and oxygen throughout the body. The heart creates this force.

When a doctor or nurse measures blood pressure, they're checking to see how much force is used to circulate the blood through the body. Naturally, if your heart is beating faster your blood pressure may also rise, but there are other factors that lead to high blood pressure like smoking, stress, or lack of physical activity.

An unusually high or low blood pressure may indicate a problem in the circulatory system.

Fun Facts About the Heart

- The average heart is the size of an adult fist.
- The heart pumps around 2,000 gallons of blood each day.

- The heart can continue to beat even when it's disconnected from the body.
- There are around 60,000 miles worth of blood vessels in the body.
- Women have slightly faster heart rates than men on average.
- Every cell in the human body gets blood from the heart except the cornea.
- Heart cancer is extremely rare -- heart cells stop dividing early in life.
- Newborns have the fastest heart rate, and it can be as high as 300 beats per minute.
- Despite popular opinion, your heart doesn't stop beating when you sneeze.

Common Heart Conditions

There are many types of heart disease and heart conditions, but here we will be discussing some of the most common ones.

Here's a quick look at common heart conditions:

- Coronary heart disease
- Angina
- Heart attack
- Heart failure
- Arrhythmia
- Valve disease
- High blood pressure
- Congenital heart defects
- Inherited heart conditions
- Sudden cardiac arrest
- High cholesterol
- Heart murmur

Coronary Heart Disease

Coronary heart disease is the most common type of heart disease. It's responsible for 370,000 deaths annually in the United States.

This disease develops when the arteries of the heart become blocked or damaged and they cannot deliver oxygen rich blood to the heart.

Coronary artery disease (CAD) is sometimes used interchangeably with coronary heart disease (CHD), but the difference is CAD is what leads to CHD. CAD is the narrowing or blockage of coronary arteries, CHD is the result.

Common symptoms of CHD include:

- Chest pain (angina)
- Cold sweats
- Dizziness
- Light-headedness

- Nausea or indigestion
- Neck pain
- Shortness of breath
- Weakness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Pain throughout the body
- Pain or discomfort specifically in the arm or shoulder

Causes of or risk factors of CHD include:

- Buildup on coronary arteries
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes

Angina

Angina is chest pain caused by reduced blood flow to the heart. It's the result of the heart not receiving enough oxygen-rich blood. **Angina is not a disease but rather a symptom.**

This condition can feel like the heart is being squeezed painfully or like there's a heavy weight on your chest.

Other symptoms include:

- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Burning
- Sweating
- Shortness of breath

The risk factors for Angina are very similar to CHD and include:

- High levels of unhealthy cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Older age
- Inactivity
- Metabolic syndrome

Heart Attack

A heart attack is the result of a blocked artery. When blood flow is severely restricted or halted to the heart, it often results in a heart attack.

Symptoms of a heart attack are:

- Angina or chest discomfort
- Nausea
- Heartburn
- Indigestion
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Lightheadedness

Men and women may experience symptoms differently. **While the most common symptom for men and women is angina, women are more likely to experience other symptoms like shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting, and back or jaw pain.**

Causes or risk factors for heart attacks:

- Having CAD or CHD
- Smoking
- A high-fat diet
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- Inactivity
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Stress



Heart Failure

Heart failure is a chronic condition that progressively gets worse. When this happens, the heart is unable to pump enough blood and oxygen to meet the body's needs.

Symptoms of heart failure are:

- Shortness of breath (with or without activity, may increase when lying down)
- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Swelling, also known as edema, in the legs, ankles, or feet
- Irregular or rapid heartbeat
- Needing to urinate during the night
- Swelling of the abdomen
- Trouble exercising
- Lack of appetite
- Decreased concentration and alertness
- Coughing up pink foamy mucus
- Angina (chest pain)
- Chronic cough

When the heart is unable to keep up with the demands of the body, it may try to do things to adjust such as enlarging the heart, developing more muscle mass, or pumping faster. It may also narrow blood vessels in order to keep blood pressure up and it may divert blood away from certain organs like the kidney, heart, or brain.

These measures help only temporarily as the condition worsens.

Common risk factors of causes of heart failure are:

- CAD and CHD
- Previous heart attacks
- High blood pressure
- Abnormal heart valves
- Damage to the heart caused by drug and alcohol use or viral infections (Cardiomyopathy)
- Heart defects present at birth (congenital heart disease)
- Severe lung disease
- Diabetes

- Obesity
- Sleep apnea
- Arrhythmia
- Kidney disease
- Tobacco or drug use
- Medications that fight cancer such as chemotherapy

Arrhythmia

Arrhythmia is an irregular heartbeat that occurs when the electrical impulses responsible for coordinating your heartbeat don't work correctly. The result is a heartbeat that's either too fast, too slow, or irregular.

Symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Fainting
- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Shortness of breath

- Anxiety
- Angina (chest pain)
- Cardiac arrest (in extreme cases)
- Heart palpitations
- Tightness in the chest
- Blurred vision
- Sweating

Causes of arrhythmia include:

- Heart disease
- Imbalance of electrolytes
- Heart injury
- Some medications
- Alcohol, tobacco, or drug use
- Air pollution
- Cardiomyopathy
- Previous heart attack
- Other medical conditions
- Valve disorders
- Stress and anxiety

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, also known as HBP or hypertension, is diagnosed when a person's blood pressure is consistently too high.

Blood pressure is necessary for the heart to pump blood and oxygen to every part of the body. When blood pressure is consistently high it may indicate a more serious health problem.

Ongoing high blood pressure can cause damage to the sensitive tissue inside the arteries.

Symptoms of high blood pressure are:

- Headaches (often severe)
- Nosebleed
- Fatigue
- Difficulty breathing
- Angina
- Dizziness
- Difficulty sleeping

- Flushing in the face
- Blood spots in the eyes
- Irregular heartbeat
- Vision problems
- Blood in the urine
- Pounding in the chest, ears, or neck

Risk factors and causes of high blood pressure include:

- Sleep apnea
- Kidney disease
- Adrenal gland tumors
- Thyroid issues
- Congenital heart disease
- Some medications including birth control pills, cold remedies, or OTC pain relievers
- Illegal substances
- Family history
- Use of tobacco products
- Inactivity

- High sodium diet
- Low potassium diet
- Excessive alcohol use
- Stress or anxiety
- Diabetes
- Genetics or family history
- Obesity



Congenital Heart Defects

A congenital heart defect is something a person has at birth. Surprisingly, this is the most common type of birth defect.

Some types of congenital heart defects are:

- **Atrial septal defect.** This type of defect means a person is born with a hole in the wall or septum that separates the right and left side of the heart.
- **Aortic valve stenosis.** This is when a valve from the heart to the body doesn't work properly. It may not open or close correctly and may leak blood.
- **Pulmonary valve stenosis.** This common valve defect in newborns can affect the right ventricle. It occurs when the heart valve is fused or thickened and doesn't fully open.

- **Coarctation of the aorta.** This occurs when the major artery that carries blood to the body is narrowed.
- **Complete Atrioventricular Canal defect.** A hole in the center of the heart where the four chambers would ordinarily be divided. This causes the blood to be mixed together and routed incorrectly.
- **d-Transposition of the great arteries.** When the two main arteries responsible for carrying blood away from the body are reversed. They connect to the wrong chambers in the heart.
- **l-transposition of the great arteries.** The same concept as d-Transposition, only this happens in the lower section of the heart.
- **Ebstein's Anomaly.** Another heart valve issue where it does not close properly, causing the blood flow to

leak or not move in the right direction.

- **Stenosis.** Valves that are narrow or stiff and don't allow blood to pass through easily.
- **Tetralogy of Fallot.** This heart defect affects four parts of the heart. The four parts are:
 - Large ventricular septal defect (VSD) which is a hole between the two ventricles
 - Pulmonary stenosis, the narrowing of blood vessels leading to the lungs
 - The aorta is located above the hole in the ventricular wall
 - The right ventricle becomes thickened, otherwise known as hypertrophied

Inherited Heart Conditions

In many cases, heart disease is the result of genetics and lifestyle with an emphasis on lifestyle. For some heart conditions, however, such as congenital heart defects or other inherited traits, heart problems are unavoidable.

Such is the case with these inherited heart conditions:

- **Familial hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.** This disease thickens the part or all of the heart muscle. This thickening usually occurs in the interventricular septum.
- **Familial dilated cardiomyopathy.** Those with this disease have the opposite problem as those with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. Instead of the heart muscles thickening, those with dilated cardiomyopathy have heart muscles that become thin and weak. It can affect both sides of the

heart and it can lead to heart failure.

- **Familial hypercholesterolemia.** This inherited condition leads to high cholesterol and it's caused by a mutation in a gene that controls how the body clears cholesterol.
- **Brugada syndrome.** A rare inherited disease that disrupts the flow of sodium or potassium ions into the heart's cells. It may cause fast or dangerous heart rhythms.
- **Long QT syndrome.** Another rare disease that causes arrhythmia.

Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Though often confused with a heart attack, cardiac arrest is not the same as a heart attack. While heart attacks are caused by blocked arteries, cardiac arrest occurs when the heart malfunctions or stops beating unexpectedly.

While heart attacks are a result of a disrupted circulation, cardiac arrest is related to a disruption in the electrical impulse that tells the heart when to pump.

Sometimes there are early signs of cardiac arrest that might include:

- Weakness
- Shortness of breath
- Heart palpitations
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Unexplained wheezing
- Fainting
- Dizziness

Unfortunately, there are often no warning signs for cardiac arrest, and once it happens, a person experiences:

- Sudden collapse
- No pulse
- Loss of consciousness
- No breathing

High Cholesterol

Cholesterol is an important part of the body. It's a waxy substance that helps build healthy cells, vitamins, and hormones.

However, too much cholesterol in the body can lead to plaque buildup in the veins and arteries which can cause a host of heart health problems.

You may also have heard the terms “good” and “bad” cholesterol. This is because there are two types of cholesterol: high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL). **HDL is often considered the good kind of cholesterol and LDL the bad.**

LDL is the type of cholesterol that goes straight to your arteries and can cause buildup or blockages. HDL is taken to the liver where it can be removed from the bloodstream.

High cholesterol really doesn't have any symptoms unless it contributes to a more

severe problem like heart attack or stroke. The main way to know cholesterol levels is to have them checked by a doctor.

Causes or risk factors for high cholesterol are:

- Genetics
- Unhealthy diet
- Inactivity
- Obesity or overweight
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Pregnancy
- Liver or kidney disease
- Polycystic ovary syndrome
- Underactive thyroid
- Certain medications like anabolic steroids

Heart Murmur

Heart murmurs produce a “whooshing” sound when a doctor listens to the heart with a stethoscope. **A heart murmur can be a congenital heart defect, or it can develop later in life.**

In many cases, heart murmurs are innocuous, or “innocent.” Abnormal heart murmurs are more concerning and require follow-up visits with the doctor. An abnormal heart murmur may indicate a damaged or overworked heart valve.

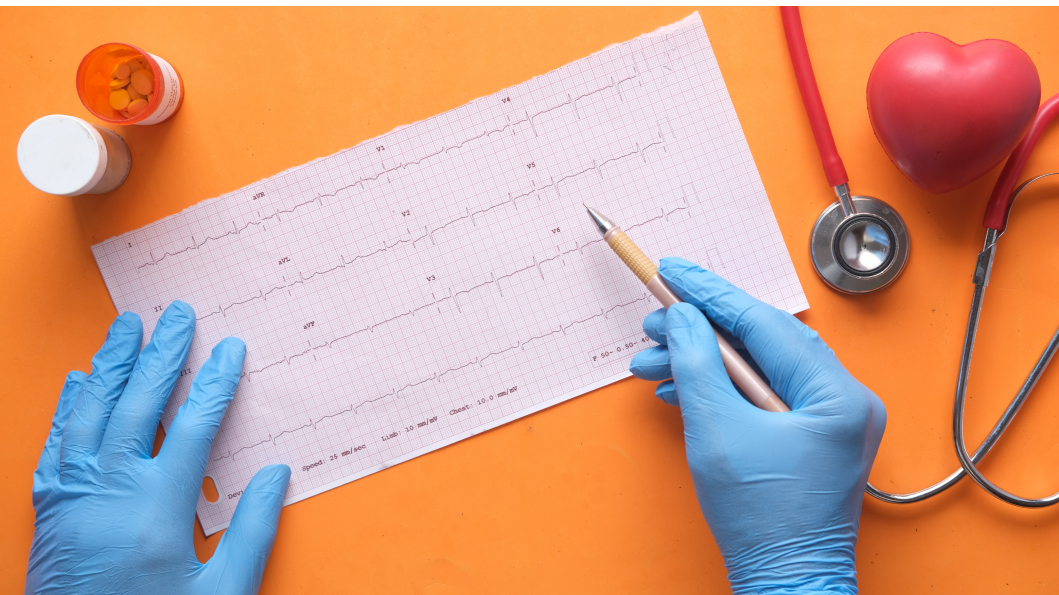
Many people with heart murmurs are symptomless, especially those with an innocent heart murmur.

For others, symptoms might include:

- Chest pain
- Rapid heartbeat
- Fatigue
- Bluish skin around the fingertips
- Breathlessness

Causes or risk factors for heart murmurs:

- Valve stenosis
- Valve regurgitation
- Septal defect
- Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy
- Anemia
- Hyperthyroidism
- Damage to the cardiac muscle
- Stress



How to Care For Your Heart

Some of the things mentioned in the section above are products of genetics or circumstances, meaning there are outside controlling factors that couldn't have been prevented. For many other heart conditions, lifestyle plays a large part in keeping the heart healthy.

Though lifestyle changes can't 100% protect you from developing a heart condition, experts believe that they can significantly reduce the risk.

What are some of the top ways that doctors, scientists, and heart specialists recommend keeping the heart healthy?

First, a quick glance at the best ways to keep the heart healthy, followed by a more in-depth look at some of these important steps:

- Start a heart-healthy diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Lower your cholesterol.
- Maintain blood pressure within a healthy range.
- Get more exercise.
- Avoid using tobacco.
- Limit alcohol consumption.
- Lower stress.
- Use preventative care and take prescribed medicine.

Heart Healthy Foods

When it comes to healthy living, eating healthy foods is almost always the first step.

A healthy diet can help prevent heart disease as well as a host of other health concerns.

Not all dieticians agree on the perfect heart healthy diet, but **some common foods that appear on heart healthy lists are:**

- Leafy green vegetables
- Fresh herbs
- Beans
- Whole grains
- Berries
- Avocados
- Salmon and other Omega-3 rich seafood
- Olive oil
- Nuts like walnuts and almonds
- Seeds like chia seeds and flax seeds
- Tomatoes
- Edamame
- Green tea
- Tofu
- Broccoli
- Grains high in fiber like oats and bran
- Skinless poultry
- Peas
- Lentils
- Drink plenty of water

Foods that are thought to increase the risk of heart disease or other heart conditions are:

- Foods high in trans-fat and saturated fat
- Processed meats
- Excessive salt consumption
- Highly processed grains and carbohydrates
- Soft drinks
- Drinks high in sugar
- Deep fried foods
- Sugary cereals

Lose Weight

Weight loss is a sensitive topic, and it can be painful to discuss. Many people say they want to lose weight in order to fit into a swimsuit or to look better, but **the health benefits of a healthy weight are more important than fitting a specific beauty standard.**

Bodies are made differently, and some people carry more weight than others naturally and genetically. However, those who are considered overweight or obese using the BMI chart are at a higher risk for developing high cholesterol, high blood sugar, and possibly even heart failure.

According to Johns Hopkins cardiologist Chiadi Ndumele, M.D., M.H.S., “Basically, being obese seems to be a ‘solo player’ associated with heart injury—that is, regardless of high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol and diabetes. Down the road, this can lead to heart failure.”

The researchers at Johns Hopkins now believe that excessive weight puts undue stress on the heart muscles, making it work harder than normal, which may contribute to heart failure in the future.

This information can be discouraging to read, but there is hope as well. **For those who are overweight, losing even a small amount of weight can contribute greatly to lowering the risk of heart problems.**

How to Lower Cholesterol

High cholesterol is thought to increase the risk of heart disease (especially LDL cholesterol).

Some ways to lower cholesterol include:

- Lower intake of saturated fats.
- Remove trans-fat from the diet.
- Eat foods high in Omega-3.
- Eat more fiber (especially soluble fiber found in foods like oatmeal, Brussels sprouts, and apples).
- Increase exercise and activity.
- Avoid smoking.
- Lose weight if necessary.



- Decrease alcohol consumption.
- Eat fewer meals with meat (especially red meat).
- Eat more fish.
- Laugh more (it increases HDL).

How to Lower Blood Pressure

Lowering high blood pressure is another way to keep your heart healthy.

Some ways to lower blood pressure are:

- Be active and exercise regularly.
- Reduce sodium intake.
- Lose weight if necessary.
- Decrease intake of refined carbohydrates.
- Lower sugar intake.
- Eat more potassium.
- Eat less processed foods.
- Quit smoking.
- Reduce stress.
- Get enough sleep.

Increase Exercise and Activity

Getting enough exercise or physical activity is another cornerstone of healthy living. Exercise is believed to lower cholesterol and blood pressure, help you lose weight, and strengthen the heart.

Many people think exercise has to be extremely intense in order to yield results, but even walking regularly can provide health benefits.

Other reasons to exercise include:

- Lowers the risk of developing diabetes
- Decreases stress
- Reduces inflammation
- Increases energy
- Lightens mood
- Enhances heart circulation
- Improves sleep

Avoid Smoking and Limit Alcohol Consumption

Smoking is linked to increased risk of heart disease. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, “Cigarette smoking is the chief cause of preventable disease and death in the United States and can harm nearly any part of the body.”

The air you breathe into your lungs goes into your heart so it can pump oxygen-rich blood to the rest of the body. Breathing in air contaminated with smoke means it's being delivered all over the body -- not just to the lungs.

Breathing in smoke and other chemicals in cigarettes can damage lungs and blood vessels and lead to cardiovascular disease like high blood pressure, stroke, or heart attack.

Excessive alcohol consumption can also be damaging to the heart. Although some studies show that moderate alcohol intake

(one drink a day for women and two for men on average) can offer health benefits like raising HDL cholesterol or preventing blood clots, the thoughts are mixed.

What most experts agree on is that excessive alcohol use can cause damage to the heart.

According to Johns Hopkins, heavy drinking can lead to, “a number of poor health outcomes, including heart conditions. Excessive alcohol intake can lead to high blood pressure, heart failure or stroke. Excessive drinking can also contribute to cardiomyopathy, a disorder that affects the heart muscle.”

Lower Stress

Studies show that stress can be another contributing factor to heart conditions.

Stress can raise blood pressure to unhealthy levels, and it can also cause a person to lose sleep and struggle with mental health.

Another way stress affects the heart is the way people handle it. Many people turn to unhealthy foods, smoking, or alcohol when they're dealing with chronic stress. People with chronic stress may also choose to exercise less because they have less energy.

Some proven ways to reduce stress include:

- Exercise regularly.
- Get enough sleep.
- Lower caffeine intake.
- Spend time with loved ones.
- Laugh more often.
- Keep a diary for thoughts and feelings.
- Say no when you're already overwhelmed.
- Meditate or pray.
- Use breathing exercises.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Quit nicotine products.

- Figure out what triggers a stress response and try to limit it in your life (if possible).
- Set real goals (don't have unrealistic expectations for yourself).
- Listen to relaxing music.
- Take a warm bath.
- Do something for fun (not work all the time).
- Seek counseling.

Have Regular Checkups

Another important part of heart health is going to regular doctor visits. **Preventative care gives doctors the opportunity to spot problems earlier and offer tips or medicine that can help reduce the risk of serious heart conditions.**

The American Heart Association released a list of medications that may be prescribed by a doctor to treat various heart conditions.

The list includes:

- **Blood thinners.** Decreases the risk of blood clots. May be prescribed to someone who is at risk for stroke.
- **Antiplatelet agents (aspirin is an example).** Prevents blood platelets from sticking together in people who have experienced a heart attack, unstable angina, stroke, and other types of cardiovascular disease.
- **Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors.** This medication expands blood vessels and lowers levels of angiotensin. Used to treat high blood pressure or heart failure.
- **Angiotensin II receptor blockers or inhibitors.** Also used to decrease high blood pressure or aid in reducing the risk of heart failure. Instead of lowering angiotensin, it prevents this chemical from having an effect on the heart or blood vessels.

- **Angiotensin receptor-neprilysin inhibitors (ARNIs).** For treatment of heart failure.
- **Beta blockers.** Used for lowering heart rate and force of contraction. Treats high blood pressure, arrhythmias, angina, and may help reduce the risk of heart attack.
- **Combined alpha and beta-blockers.** Used to treat high blood pressure.
- **Calcium channel blockers.** For lowering heart's pumping strength and helps relax blood vessels. Can help with angina or arrhythmia.
- **Cholesterol-lowering medications.** Lowers LDL cholesterol.
- **Diuretics.** Also known as “water pills,” they remove excess sodium from the body through urination. Helps with high blood pressure and edema.

- **Vasodilators.** Relax blood vessels and lower blood pressure. Help reduce angina.



How to Maintain a Healthy Diet, Stick to an Exercise Plan, and Lose Weight

Exercise, maintaining a healthy diet, and losing weight sound great but can be very difficult in practice. Stress can easily cause us to fall back on old habits.

People abandon diet and exercise plans often, because they're difficult or don't fit easily into their lifestyle. They may also quit when they don't see immediate results, or when weight loss is slow and difficult.

For those of you thinking about starting a new routine, or those who are discouraged with their old ones, here are some helpful tips and reminders:

1. **Change only one thing at a time.**
Attempting to flip your entire diet in a day or suddenly starting an intense workout routine really isn't

sustainable. Try small changes at first. Swap one bag of chips for a fruit or vegetable, for instance.

- Another example would be choosing a day of the week to start walking for thirty minutes to an hour. It's not necessary or recommended to start running a marathon on day 1.

2. **Slowly remove the unhealthy foods from your home.** If you have unhealthy foods in your house, you're probably going to eat them. Start replacing your unhealthy snacks with healthier ones one at a time.

3. **Avoid drastic diet plans.** Unfortunately, we may be tempted to use diet plans that offer quick weight loss. Some of these encourage us to starve ourselves or eat very little. This may lead to temporary weight loss, but **sudden and sharp decreases in weight are not healthy.**

- According to *Women's Health Magazine*, starving your body messes up your metabolism, lessens your ability to exercise, and makes it harder to sleep. Eventually, you may end up eating a much larger portion of food because your body believes it's in trouble.
4. **Be patient with yourself.** It's pretty common to toss a whole diet or exercise plan when you fall out of routine. If you eat a piece of pie or get a basket of fries, it doesn't undo all your hard work to stay healthy, and if you miss a week of exercise it doesn't mean you can't pick it up again the next week.
 5. **Keep healthy snacks ready and prepared.** One of the biggest reasons someone eats unhealthy snacks is because they get a sudden craving for something to eat. Be prepared ahead of time with healthier snacks like homemade trail mix, cut up fruits or

veggies, or hard-boiled eggs.

- These snacks will keep you feeling fuller longer than quick unhealthy carbs, too.

6. **Eat to be full - without overeating.**

Some diet plans remove anything that might actually help a person feel full or have energy. **Remember, the goal isn't to starve yourself but to provide enough calories and fat to keep your body at a healthy weight.**

- Try eating foods that will keep you feeling satisfied like protein, healthy fats, and foods high in fiber.

7. **Start a meal plan and pick a day to meal prep.** Many people eat unhealthy meals and snacks because they're busy and their schedule is packed. Meal prep and meal planning can help get your week ready, so you aren't coming home after a long day of work hungry and not knowing what to eat.

8. **Keep increasing your physical activity.** If you don't participate in any kind of regular physical activity, start by going on a walk or swim once a week. As time goes on, start adding more activity. **Your body will grow stronger and you'll find you have more stamina to keep going.**
9. **Find a workout buddy.** Find a friend or relative who also wants to start exercising. You can hold each other accountable and make the experience a lot more enjoyable.
10. **Pick a good time for exercise.** Pick a time during the day that works for your exercise. It might be early in the morning before school or work, in the early afternoon, or in the early evening. Try to avoid exercising an hour or two before bed as it might make it difficult to sleep.

Tools That Can Help Record Heart Activity

Fortunately, there are several tools that can help record the heart's activity or heart-related health stats.

These tools include:

1. **Blood pressure monitor.** A non-medical professional can purchase a blood pressure monitor and take their blood pressure twice in the morning and twice in the evening to get a good reading. Try to do this for at least three days to get an average.
2. **Heart rate monitor.** This tool lets you know your heart rate so you can determine how hard your heart is working during different activities.
Ask your doctor what a good, healthy heart rate is for you.

3. **Health apps.** Apps on your phone or smartwatch can help keep up with your heart rate and also push you to increase physical activity during the day.
4. **Home scale.** If you're trying to lose weight, a home scale can help keep track of your weight loss goals. Just remember that you may see an increase in weight at first, as muscle weighs more than fat. Don't put too much stock in losing pounds only, as measuring your waist may be a better indicator.
5. **Cholesterol home test kit.** These kits can be purchased at a medical supply store or pharmacy and allow you to check your cholesterol when you're not at the doctor's office.

Keeping the Heart Healthy Starts With A Healthy Lifestyle

Having a healthy heart means maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Eat healthy meals that include things like colorful fruits and vegetables, dark leafy greens, nuts and seeds, fish, and skinless chicken. Avoid eating highly processed foods, deep fried foods, or foods high in sodium or sugar.

Fit exercise into your weekly plan and try to aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week. Find a partner who will exercise with you and choose activities you enjoy. Don't make working out a chore, but rather something that makes you feel better.

Start out slowly and increase activity as time goes on. Remember that you don't have to run a marathon your first week, and

you don't have to give up when you miss a week or two (or more).

Each time you make a choice to eat better or exercise instead of sitting on the couch, you're making a good choice for your heart.



Resources

- <https://www.heart.org/>
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/topics/heart-health>
- <https://www.webmd.com/heart/heart-health-tips>
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/want-to-check-your-heart-rate-heres-how>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/heart.html>
- <https://www.webmd.com/heart/picture-of-the-heart>
- <https://www.usavascularcenters.com/heart-disease-vs-arterial-disease-whats-difference/>
- https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/coronary_ad.htm
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/warning-signs-of-a-heart-attack>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure/what-is-heart-failure>

- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure/causes-and-risks-for-heart-failure/causes-of-heart-failure>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-arrhythmia/symptoms-causes/syc-20350668>
- <https://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/atrial-fibrillation/heart-disease-abnormal-heart-rhythm>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/the-facts-about-high-blood-pressure/what-is-high-blood-pressure>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/congenital-heart-defects/about-congenital-heart-defects/common-types-of-heart-defects>
- <https://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/types-congenital-heart-defects>
- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/17340-pediatric-tetralogy-of-fallot>
- <https://www.pennmedicine.org/updates/blogs/heart-and-vascular-blog/2019/january/inherited-heart-diseases>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/about-heart-attacks/heart->

[attack-or-sudden-cardiac-arrest-how-are-they-different](#)

- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/cholesterol/about-cholesterol>
- <https://www.keckmedicine.org/what-is-the-difference-between-good-and-bad-cholesterol>
- <https://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/guide/heart-murmur-causes-treatments>
- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/17083-heart-murmur>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2020/03/23/soy-rich-foods-like-tofu-may-help-lower-heart-disease-risk>
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/avoid-these-foods-for-a-healthier-heart>
- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/weight-a-silent-heart-risk>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/losing-weight/bmi-in-adults>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/coronary-artery-disease/foods-to-eat-and-avoid>

- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/weight-a-silent-heart-risk>
- <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/health-information/how-smoking-affects-heart-health>
- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/alcohol-and-heart-health-separating-fact-from-fiction>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/treatment-of-a-heart-attack/cardiac-medications>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/heart-attack-tools-and-resources>