

6 TIPS TO KEEP YOUR HEART HEALTHY

There are several risk factors associated with Heart Disease. You can't control some risk factors, such as age and a family history of heart disease. However, there are many risk factors you can control such as smoking, unhealthy cholesterol levels, and high blood pressure.



1. Get Active

You should aim for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week of moderate exercise. That includes any activity that gets you moving around and breaking a slight sweat. Also, pay attention to how much time you spend seated, whether it's at work, in your car, or on your couch at home. You want to cut that time down.

2. Lowering Your Blood Pressure

High blood pressure can usually be lowered by cutting back on salt, limiting alcohol to no more than one to two drinks a day, favoring healthy eating habits (think fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein) managing your stress, and working out. Your doctor may also recommend taking medication.

3. Avoid Cigarettes

Smoking and secondhand smoke damages the lining of your arteries, leading to a buildup of fatty material, which narrows the artery. This can cause angina, a heart attack, or a stroke. If you smoke, quit, and don't spend time around others who smoke as well. For more information on how to quit smoking visit <http://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/> and talk to your doctor.

4. Aim For Seven Hours of Sleep

In a recent study, young and middle-age adults who slept 7 hours a night had less calcium in their arteries, an early sign of heart disease, than those who slept 5 hours or less or those who slept 9 hours or more. If you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep at night, or if you don't feel refreshed after a full night in bed, talk to your doctor about what changes you can make to help.

5. Eating a Healthy Diet

Avoid Saturated and Trans Fats. To help your heart's arteries, cut down on saturated fats, which are mainly found in meat and full-fat dairy products. Choose leaner cuts and reduced-fat options. Trans fats drive up "bad" cholesterol level. Check ingredient lists for anything that say "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated" -- those are trans fats.

Some heart healthy foods include: Fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring, and trout), a handful of healthy nuts like walnuts and almonds, berries, oatmeal, a glass of red wine per day, spinach, and a moderate serving of dark chocolate (at least 70% cocoa).

6. Reduce Your Stress

Stress can be a direct risk factor of heart disease and it can cause other risk factors to increase, like high blood pressure. Everyone has different stress triggers or coping abilities, **Some ways to reduce stress levels are:** exercising regularly, making time for activities you enjoy, practicing deep breathing exercises, and setting realistic goals and expectations.