



American
Heart
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21 TIPS

That Can Help
Save Your Life



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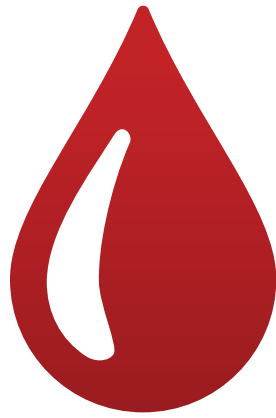
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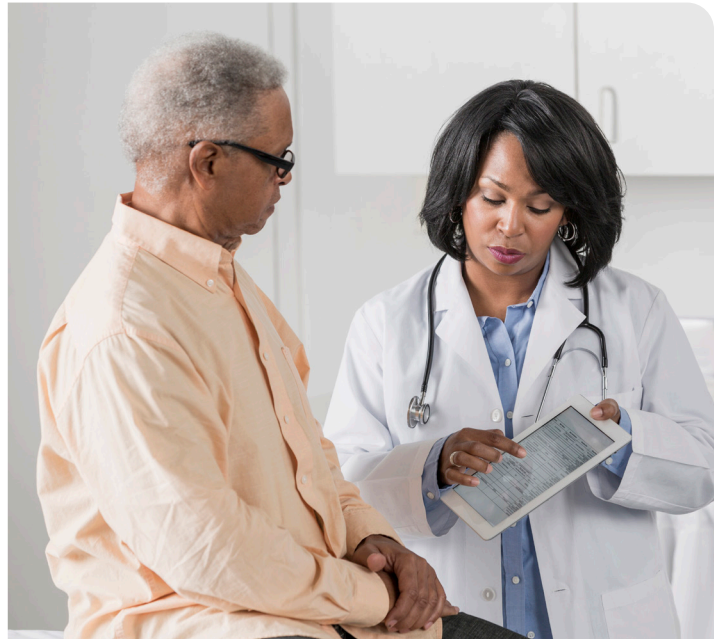
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Cholesterol

How Do My Cholesterol Levels Affect My Risk of Heart Attack and Stroke?

High cholesterol can increase your risk of heart attack and stroke. If you're 20 or older, you should have your traditional risk factors (including cholesterol) checked every four to six years. If certain factors put you at risk, or you already have heart disease, your doctor may ask you to check it more often.



What should my cholesterol levels be?

You should look beyond cholesterol levels alone. The best approach considers overall risk assessment and reduction.

It's important to know your numbers and work with your doctor to treat your risk. They will assess your risk factors to choose the best treatment options.

- If you're between 40 and 75, ask your doctor to assess your 10-year risk.
- If you're between 20 and 39, priority would be to get an estimate of lifetime risk. If your risk is high, lifestyle and statin medication may help manage it.

If your risk remains uncertain, or treatment options are unclear, your doctor may do a coronary artery calcium (CAC) test. This provides greater insight into your risk and helps in decision-making.

You can check your risk with our [Check. Change. Control. Calculator™](#). In minutes, you'll learn your risk for a heart attack or stroke.

How will I know my numbers?

Your doctor will do a blood test to measure your cholesterol levels. This may be a "fasting" or "non-fasting lipoprotein profile." It assesses several types of fat in the blood. It's measured in milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL).

The test gives you four results: total cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglycerides (blood fats).

What is HDL cholesterol?

HDL cholesterol is called "good" cholesterol. A healthy HDL-cholesterol level may protect against heart attack and stroke.

HDL takes cholesterol away from your arteries and back to the liver. There, it's processed so that excess can be removed from your body. HDL may also remove cholesterol from plaque in the arteries.

What is LDL cholesterol?

LDL cholesterol is known as "bad" cholesterol. The body's tissues use some of this cholesterol to build cells. But too much of it can cause fatty buildups inside your arteries.

Together with other substances, it can form **plaque** (a thick, hard, fatty deposit). Plaque narrows the arteries and reduces blood flow. This is called **atherosclerosis**. If the buildup of plaque ruptures, a blood clot may form at this location or a piece may break off and travel in the bloodstream, causing a heart attack or stroke.

With LDL, lower is better to reduce heart attack and stroke risk in people who are at high risk.

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What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides are the most common type of fat in your body. They come from food, and your body also makes them. They store excess energy from your diet.

A high triglyceride level combined with high LDL (bad) cholesterol or low HDL (good) cholesterol is linked with fatty buildups within the artery walls. This increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Should I track my numbers?

Use the chart below to track your results each time you have a test. Discuss these numbers and your other risk factors and how they affect your overall risk with your doctor.



	1st Visit	2nd Visit	3rd Visit	4th Visit
Total Blood Cholesterol				
LDL (bad) Cholesterol				
HDL (good) Cholesterol				
Triglycerides				

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families, at HeartInsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

How can I reduce my cholesterol?

How often should I have my cholesterol checked?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.



How Can I Improve My Cholesterol?

Most heart and blood vessel disease is caused by a buildup of cholesterol, plaque and other fatty deposits in artery walls. The arteries that feed the heart can become so clogged the blood flow is reduced, causing chest pain. If a blood clot forms and blocks the artery, a heart attack can occur. If a blood clot blocks an artery leading to or in the brain, a stroke results.

You can make lifestyle changes to improve your cholesterol. You can eat heart-healthy foods, reach and maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and not smoke. Some people also need to take medicine.

Your doctor can help you create a plan to improve your cholesterol. It's important to follow your plan and discuss any concerns you have with your doctor.



Cholesterol can join with fats and other substances in your blood to build up in the inner walls of your arteries. The arteries can become clogged and narrow, and blood flow is reduced.

What should I eat?

Focus on foods low in saturated and trans fats such as:

- A variety of fruits and vegetables.
- A variety of whole grain foods such as whole-grain bread, cereal, pasta and brown rice. At least half of the servings should be whole grains.
- Fat-free, 1% and low-fat milk products.
- Skinless poultry and lean meats. When you choose to eat red meat and pork, select options labeled "loin" and "round." These cuts usually have the least amount of fat.
- Fatty fish such as salmon, trout, albacore tuna and sardines. Enjoy at least 8 ounces of non-fried fish each week.
- Unsalted nuts, seeds, and legumes (dried beans or peas).
- Nontropical vegetable oils like canola, corn, olive, or safflower oils.

What should I limit?

- Foods with a lot of sodium (salt)
- Sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages
- Red meats and fatty meats that aren't trimmed
- Processed meats such as bologna, salami and sausage
- Full-fat dairy products such as whole milk, cream, ice cream, butter and cheese
- Baked goods made with saturated and trans fats such as donuts, cakes and cookies
- Foods that list the words "hydrogenated oils" in the ingredients panel
- Saturated oils like coconut oil, palm oil and palm kernel oil
- Solid fats like shortening, stick margarine and lard
- Fried foods

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What are some cooking tips?

- Add a variety of fruits and vegetables to your meals.
- Use a rack to drain off fat when you broil, roast or bake poultry and meats.
- Look for leaner cuts if you choose to eat meat.
- Don't baste with drippings; use wine, fruit juice or marinade.
- Broil or grill instead of pan-frying.
- Cut off all visible fat from meat before cooking.
- Remove the skin from poultry.
- Use a vegetable oil spray to brown or sauté foods.
- Serve smaller portions of higher-calorie dishes.
- Use low-fat, low-sodium options instead of regular cheese.



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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

What about eating out?

Why are weight control and physical activity important?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.



What Are Cholesterol-Lowering Medicines?

If your doctor decided you need cholesterol-lowering medicine, it's because you're at high risk for heart attack or stroke. Treatment usually combines healthy lifestyle changes, including diet and physical activity, and medicine.

Most heart attacks and many strokes are caused by a buildup of fat, cholesterol and other substances called **plaque** in the inner walls of your arteries. The arteries become clogged and narrowed, and blood flow is reduced. If a blood clot forms and blocks blood flow to your heart, it causes a heart attack. If a blood clot blocks an artery leading to or in the brain, a stroke results.

You can help prevent a heart attack or stroke by working with your doctor to reduce your cholesterol levels and other risk factors.



What medicine may I be prescribed?

Various medicines can lower blood cholesterol levels. Statins are recommended for most patients. They have been directly associated with reducing risk for heart attack and stroke. Statins continue to provide the most effective LDL-lowering treatment in most cases.

Statins (HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors) prevent the production of cholesterol in the liver. Their major effect is to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol. Some names are lovastatin, pravastatin, simvastatin, fluvastatin and atorvastatin.

Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of statin therapy if you are in one of the following groups:

- Adults with known cardiovascular disease (CVD), including stroke, caused by atherosclerosis
- Adults aged 40-75 years with diabetes
- Adults with LDL-cholesterol (LDL-C) level of greater than or equal to 190 mg/dL
- Adults, aged 40 – 75 years, with LDL-C level of 70-189 mg/

dL and a 5% to less than 20% 10-year risk of developing CVD from atherosclerosis, with risk enhancing factors

- Adults aged 40 – 75 years, with LDL-C level of 70-189 mg/dL and a 20% or greater 10-year risk of developing CVD from atherosclerosis

Some people who aren't in these groups also may benefit from statin therapy.

What other drugs may be prescribed?

Your doctor will monitor your progress on your statin therapy. If you're having serious side effects or don't have the desired response to statin therapy and lifestyle changes, your doctor may change the dose or consider adding on other medicines.

If you have CVD and are already taking the highest statin you can tolerate and your LDL-C is still 70 mg/dL or above, one or more of the following medicines may be prescribed. They all can be given with a statin.

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What Are Cholesterol-Lowering Medicines?

Ezetimibe (cholesterol absorption inhibitors) works by preventing cholesterol from being absorbed in the intestine. It's the most commonly used non-statin agent.

Bile acid sequestrants cause the intestine to get rid of more cholesterol. Some names are cholestyramine, cholestipol and colesevelam.

PCSK9 inhibitors are powerful LDL-lowering drugs. They bind to and inactivate a protein in liver to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol. Some names are alirocumab and evolocumab.

Fibrates and **niacin** are triglyceride-lowering drugs that have mild LDL-lowering action, but data does not support their use as an add-on to statins. Take niacin only if it's prescribed.

Your doctor will work with you to decide which medicine, or combination of medicines, is best for you. Always follow your doctor's instructions, and let them know if you have any side effects. Never stop taking your medicine on your own!

How do I know if my medicine is working?

Your doctor will test your blood cholesterol levels as needed to monitor your progress.



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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

What if I forgot a dose?

Should I avoid any foods or other medicines?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.

How Can I Monitor My Cholesterol, Blood Pressure and Weight?

High cholesterol, high blood pressure and being overweight or obese are major risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

High blood pressure and high cholesterol are dangerous but have no warning signs. You should schedule regular tests with your doctor's office to make sure your levels are OK. Also talk to your doctor about the healthiest weight for you.

It's important to know your numbers. You can record your blood pressure, cholesterol and weight in the table below to track your progress. Talk to your doctor about your numbers and how they affect your overall risk. Then ask how often to check your levels.



Date						
Blood Pressure (mm Hg)						
Total Cholesterol (mg/dL)						
LDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)						
HDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)						
Triglycerides (mg/dL)						
Weight (pounds)						



How Can I Monitor My Cholesterol, Blood Pressure and Weight?

What can I do to lower my cholesterol and blood pressure?

- Eat a heart-healthy diet low in saturated and trans fats, sodium and added sugars. A healthy diet includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, skinless poultry, fish/seafood, legumes (beans and peas), nontropical vegetable oils and nuts.
- Eat at least 8 ounces of non-fried fish each week, particularly fatty fish like salmon.
- Limit red meats. If you eat red meats, select lean cuts of meat. Trim all visible fat and throw away the fat that cooks out of the meat.
- Substitute meatless or “low-meat” dishes for regular entrees.
- Aim to consume less than 1,500 mg per day of sodium. Even reducing your daily intake by 1,000 mg per day can help. Limit your intake of processed, packaged and fast foods, which can be high in sodium.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. If you’re a woman, have no more than one drink a day. If you’re a man, have no more than two drinks a day.
- Be physically active. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of

vigorous activity a week (or a combination of both).

- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Don’t smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Take your medicines as prescribed by your health care professional.

How can I manage my weight?

Lifestyle changes such as the ones listed above may help you lose 3% to 5% of your body weight. This could result in meaningful health benefits. Larger weight losses (5% to 10%) can produce even greater benefits. To lose weight, you must take in fewer calories than you use up through normal metabolism and physical activity. The goal is to reduce the number of calories you eat and increase your physical activity.

- Get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week.
- To maintain weight loss or reduce how much you regain, some people need more physical activity each week (200-300 minutes).

If you can’t lose weight on your own, talk to a doctor, registered dietitian (R.D.) or licensed nutritionist. You can work together to create a healthy weight-loss plan.

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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

What kind of physical activity should I do?

What is a healthy weight for me?

MY QUESTIONS:

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High Blood Pressure



What is High Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls. It's measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).

High blood pressure (HBP) means the pressure in your arteries is higher than it should be. Another name for high blood pressure is hypertension.

Blood pressure is written as two numbers, such as 112/78 mm Hg. The top, or larger, number (called systolic pressure) is the pressure when the heart beats. The bottom, or smaller, number (called diastolic pressure) is the pressure when the heart rests between beats.

Normal blood pressure is below 120/80 mm Hg. If you're an adult and your systolic pressure is 120 to 129, and your diastolic pressure is less than 80, you have **elevated blood pressure**. **High blood pressure** is a systolic pressure of 130 or higher, or a diastolic pressure of 80 or higher, that stays high over time.

High blood pressure usually has no signs or symptoms. That's why it is so dangerous. But it can be managed.

Nearly half of the American population over age 20, has HBP, and many don't even know it. Not treating high blood pressure is dangerous. High blood pressure increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Make sure you get your blood pressure checked regularly and treat it the way your health care professional advises.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120-129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130-139	or	80-89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

Am I at higher risk of developing HBP?

There are risk factors that increase your chances of developing HBP. Some you can control, and some you can't.

Those that can be controlled are:

- Cigarette smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke
- Diabetes
- Being obese or overweight
- High cholesterol
- Unhealthy diet (high in sodium, low in potassium, and drinking too much alcohol)
- Physical inactivity

Factors that can't be modified or are difficult to control are:

- Family history of high blood pressure
- Race/ethnicity
- Increasing age
- Gender (males)
- Chronic kidney disease
- Obstructive sleep apnea

Socioeconomic status and psychosocial stress are also risk factors for HBP. These can affect access to basic living needs, medication, health care professionals, and the ability to adopt lifestyle changes.

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How can I tell I have it?

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to get it checked regularly.

For proper diagnosis of HBP, your health care professional will use an average based on two or more readings obtained on two or more visits.



What can I do about HBP?

- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a healthy diet that is low in saturated and trans fats and rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products. Aim to consume less than 1,500 mg/day of sodium (salt). Even reducing your daily intake by 1,000 mg can help.
- Eat foods rich in potassium. Aim for 3,500 – 5,000 mg of dietary potassium per day.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day if you're a woman or two drinks a day if you're a man.
- Be more physically active. Aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity or at least 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week, or a combination of both, spread throughout the week. Add muscle-strengthening activity at least two days per week for more health benefits.
- Take medicine the way your health care professional tells you.
- Know what your blood pressure should be and work to keep it at that level.

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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

Will I always have to take medicine?

What should my blood pressure be?

MY QUESTIONS:

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How Can I Reduce High Blood Pressure?

By treating high blood pressure, you can help reduce your risk for a stroke, heart attack, heart failure and kidney failure.

These are steps you can take now:

- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet that includes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish, legumes, non-tropical vegetable oils and nuts. It should also limit sodium, sweets, saturated fats, sugar sweetened beverages and red meats.
- Be more physically active.
- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women or two drinks a day for men.
- Take your medication as prescribed.
- Know what your blood pressure should be and work to keep it at that level.



How can I lose weight?

In order to lose weight, you need to use up more calories than you eat and drink every day. Talk with your health care professional about a healthy eating and physical activity plan that will help you reach your weight loss goals. When you lose weight, your blood pressure often goes down! An initial weight loss goal of at least 5% will help reduce your blood pressure.

How do I limit sodium?

Aim for an ideal limit of less than 1,500 milligrams (mg) per day of sodium. Even cutting back by 1,000 mg a day can help improve your blood pressure and heart health.

You can reduce your sodium intake by:

- Reading the Nutrition Facts label on foods so you know how much sodium is in food products. Foods with 140 mg or less sodium per serving are considered low in sodium.
- Avoiding prepackaged, processed and prepared foods, which tend to be higher in sodium.

- Reducing salt in cooking and at the table. Learn to use herbs and salt-free spices instead.

How do I limit alcohol?

Ask your health care professional if you're allowed to drink alcohol, and if so, how much.

If you drink more than two drinks a day if you're male or more than one drink a day if you're female, it may add to high blood pressure. One drink is equal to 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits or 1 ounce of 100-proof spirits.

If cutting back on alcohol is hard for you to do on your own, ask about groups that can help.

How can I be more active?

Regular physical activity helps to reduce blood pressure, control weight and reduce stress. It's best to start slowly

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How Can I Reduce High Blood Pressure?

and do something you enjoy, like taking brisk walks or riding a bicycle.

Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity (or a combination of both) per week. Talk to your health care professional about a good plan for you.

What should I know about medication?

Depending on your risk and blood pressure levels, you may need one or more types of medication to keep your blood pressure at a healthy level. You may need a trial period before your doctor finds the best medication, or combination of medications, for you.

What's most important is that you take your medication exactly as prescribed. Never stop treatment on your own. If you have problems or side effects from your medication, talk to your health care professional.



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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

Can I drink any alcohol?

How often should I check my blood pressure?

MY QUESTIONS:

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What is High Blood Pressure Medicine?

Your health care professional has prescribed medicine to help lower your blood pressure. Depending on your risk and blood pressure levels, you may need one or more types of medicine to keep your blood pressure at a healthy level.

You may have to see your health care professional often until your blood pressure is under control. Every person reacts differently to medication. You may need a trial period before your doctor finds the best medication, or combination of medications, for you.



Taking your medication the way your health care professional tells you to is key to reducing your blood pressure.

What should I know about high blood pressure medication?

- Different medications work in unique ways to help lower your blood pressure.
- HBP medication only works when you take it as prescribed.
- Medication shouldn't be stopped without your health care professional's approval.
- Even after your blood pressure is lowered, treatment usually continues for your lifetime to keep your blood pressure normal.

What types of medication may be prescribed?

One or more of these medications are initially used to treat high blood pressure:

- Diuretics – help control blood pressure by removing excess sodium (salt) and water from your body through urination. These are sometimes called “water pills.”

- Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) and calcium channel blockers – relax and open up the narrowed blood vessels and lower blood pressure.

What are the side effects?

Some HBP medications can affect certain body functions. This may result in side effects. But the benefits of using them outweigh the risk of side effects in most people.

Some of the common side effects that may occur include:

- Weakness, tiredness or drowsiness
- Erectile dysfunction
- Trouble sleeping
- Slow or fast heartbeat
- Skin rash
- Feeling thirsty
- Cough
- Muscle cramps
- Headache, dizziness or light-headedness
- Constipation or diarrhea

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What is High Blood Pressure Medicine?

If you are having side effects, don't stop taking your medication to avoid them. Your health care professional can work with you to find the medication or dose that works best for you.

How can I remember to take my medication?

Sometimes it's hard to keep track of your medication. But to be safe, you must take it properly. These are some good ways:

- Take your medicine at the same time each day.
- Take medicine along with daily events such as brushing your teeth.
- Use a weekly pill box with separate sections for each day or time of day.
- Ask family and friends to help remind you.
- Use a medicine calendar.
- Set a reminder on your smartphone.



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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

Should I avoid any foods or medicines?

What reactions or side effects should I expect?

MY QUESTIONS:

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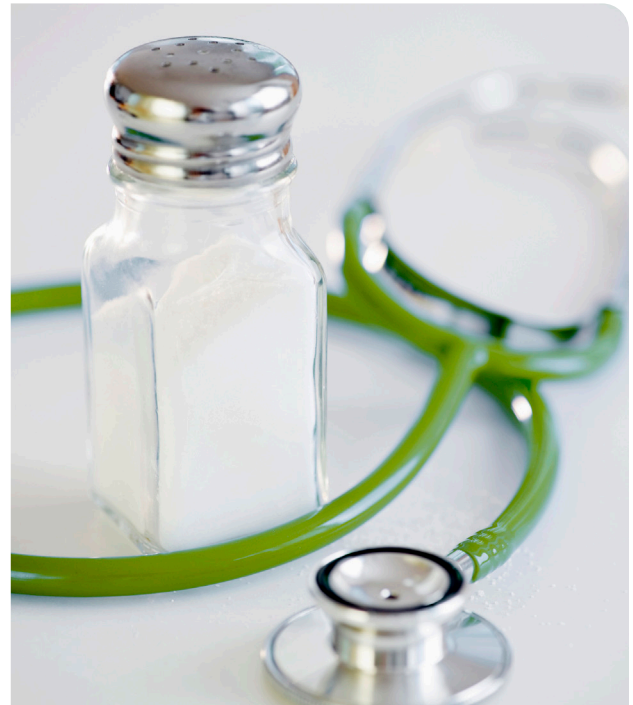


Why Should I Limit Sodium?

You may have been told by your health care professional to reduce the sodium, or salt, in your diet. Most people eat too much sodium, often without knowing it. Reducing the amount of sodium in your diet can help you lower or avoid high blood pressure.

Your body needs sodium to work properly. It's regulated in the body by your kidneys, and it helps control your body's fluid balance. It also plays a key role in nerve and muscle function.

But too much sodium in your system causes your body to retain (hold onto) water. This may cause puffiness, bloating and weight gain.



How does too much sodium affect my heart health?

When there's extra sodium in your bloodstream, it pulls water into your blood vessels, increasing the amount of blood inside your blood vessels. With more blood flowing through your blood vessels, blood pressure increases. In some people, this may lead to or raise high blood pressure.

Having less sodium in your diet may help you lower or avoid high blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

How much sodium do I need?

Nine out of 10 Americans consume too much sodium. The average American eats more than 3,400 milligrams (mg) of sodium a day.

- The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 mg a day and an ideal limit of less than 1,500 mg per day for most adults, especially for those with high blood pressure.
- Even cutting back by 1,000 mg a day can improve blood pressure and heart health.

What are sources of sodium?

Many foods in their natural state contain some sodium. But the largest amount of sodium comes from processed, packaged and restaurant foods.

Pay attention to food labels, because they tell how much sodium is in food products. For example: foods with 140 mg or less sodium per serving are considered low in sodium. Sodium levels of the same type of food can vary widely. Compare the Nutrition Facts labels and select the products with the lowest amount of sodium per serving.

Some over-the-counter and prescription medicines also contain lots of sodium. Ask your health care professional or pharmacist about the sodium in your medicines. Make reading the labels of all over-the-counter drugs a habit, too.

What foods should I limit?

The best way to reduce sodium is to avoid prepackaged, processed and prepared foods, which tend to be higher in sodium.

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Why Should I Limit Sodium?

Watch out for the “Salty 6” – the top six common foods that add the most salt to your diet.

- Breads and rolls
- Pizza
- Sandwiches
- Cold cuts and cured meats
- Soup
- Burritos and tacos

These are some other foods can also be sources of “hidden” sodium:

- Cheeses and buttermilk
- Canned vegetables
- Frozen dinners and snack foods
- Condiments (ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise)
- Sauces, such as barbecue, soy, steak and Worcestershire

How can I cook with less salt and more flavor?

- Avoid adding table salt to foods.
- Flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar or salt-free seasoning blends.

- Use fresh poultry, fish and lean meat, rather than canned, smoked or processed types.
- Choose unsalted nuts and low-sodium canned foods.
- Cook dried peas and beans.
- Use products made without added salt. Try low-sodium bouillon and soups and unsalted broth.
- Rinse canned vegetables and beans to reduce sodium.

What about eating out?

Controlling your sodium intake doesn't mean spoiling the pleasure of eating out. But order carefully. Consider these tips for meals away from home:

- Look at the restaurant's menu before going out. Check the online nutrition information if available.
- Select fresh greens and fruits when available. Ask for oil and vinegar to top your salad or ask for the dressing on the side.
- Be specific about what you want and how you want your food prepared. Request that your dish be prepared without added salt.
- Remember portion control. You can always bring home a to-go box!

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at HeartInsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

What's my daily sodium limit?

Is there sodium in the medicine I take?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.

How Can I Monitor My Cholesterol, Blood Pressure and Weight?

High cholesterol, high blood pressure and being overweight or obese are major risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

High blood pressure and high cholesterol are dangerous but have no warning signs. You should schedule regular tests with your doctor's office to make sure your levels are OK. Also talk to your doctor about the healthiest weight for you.

It's important to know your numbers. You can record your blood pressure, cholesterol and weight in the table below to track your progress. Talk to your doctor about your numbers and how they affect your overall risk. Then ask how often to check your levels.



Date						
Blood Pressure (mm Hg)						
Total Cholesterol (mg/dL)						
LDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)						
HDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)						
Triglycerides (mg/dL)						
Weight (pounds)						



How Can I Monitor My Cholesterol, Blood Pressure and Weight?

What can I do to lower my cholesterol and blood pressure?

- Eat a heart-healthy diet low in saturated and trans fats, sodium and added sugars. A healthy diet includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, skinless poultry, fish/seafood, legumes (beans and peas), nontropical vegetable oils and nuts.
- Eat at least 8 ounces of non-fried fish each week, particularly fatty fish like salmon.
- Limit red meats. If you eat red meats, select lean cuts of meat. Trim all visible fat and throw away the fat that cooks out of the meat.
- Substitute meatless or “low-meat” dishes for regular entrees.
- Aim to consume less than 1,500 mg per day of sodium. Even reducing your daily intake by 1,000 mg per day can help. Limit your intake of processed, packaged and fast foods, which can be high in sodium.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. If you’re a woman, have no more than one drink a day. If you’re a man, have no more than two drinks a day.
- Be physically active. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of

vigorous activity a week (or a combination of both).

- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Don’t smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Take your medicines as prescribed by your health care professional.

How can I manage my weight?

Lifestyle changes such as the ones listed above may help you lose 3% to 5% of your body weight. This could result in meaningful health benefits. Larger weight losses (5% to 10%) can produce even greater benefits. To lose weight, you must take in fewer calories than you use up through normal metabolism and physical activity. The goal is to reduce the number of calories you eat and increase your physical activity.

- Get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week.
- To maintain weight loss or reduce how much you regain, some people need more physical activity each week (200-300 minutes).

If you can’t lose weight on your own, talk to a doctor, registered dietitian (R.D.) or licensed nutritionist. You can work together to create a healthy weight-loss plan.

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- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

What kind of physical activity should I do?

What is a healthy weight for me?

MY QUESTIONS:

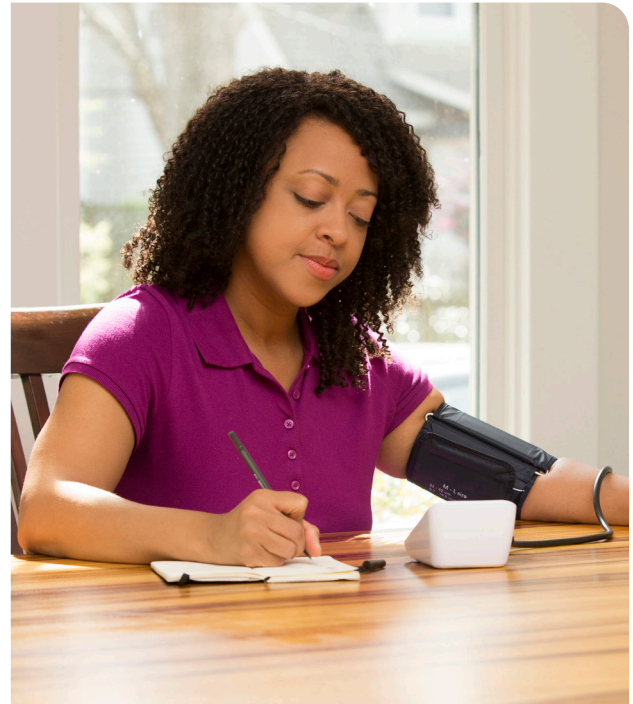
We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.



What About African Americans and High Blood Pressure?

African Americans in the U.S. have a higher prevalence of high blood pressure (HBP) than other racial and ethnic groups. It is also often more severe in Black people and some medications are less effective in treating Black people with HBP.

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms. That's why it's called the "silent killer." The only way to know if your blood pressure is high is to have your health care professional check it regularly.



What's blood pressure?

When your heart beats, it pumps blood into your blood vessels. This creates pressure against the blood vessel walls. This blood pressure causes your blood to flow to all parts of your body. Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).

What should my blood pressure be?

Normal blood pressure is below 120/80 mm Hg. The top, or larger, number is the systolic pressure. It's the pressure in your arteries when the heart beats. The bottom, or smaller, number is diastolic pressure. This is the pressure when the heart rests between beats. If you're an adult with a systolic blood pressure of 120 to 129 mm Hg, and your diastolic pressure is less than 80 mm Hg, you have elevated blood pressure. High blood pressure is a pressure of 130 systolic or higher and/or 80 diastolic or higher that stays high over time.

How often should I have my blood pressure checked?

For proper diagnosis of HBP, your health care professional will use an average based on two or more readings obtained on two or more occasions.

Checking your blood pressure is quick and painless. You can have it done at a doctor's office, hospital, clinic, nurse's office, pharmacy, company clinic or health fair. You can also purchase a home blood pressure monitor so you can check it at home. Your health care professional will tell you how often you should have it checked.

How can high blood pressure affect me?

Left uncontrolled or undetected, HBP can damage blood vessels in various parts of your body. And the longer it's left untreated, the more likely organs such as your heart, brain, kidneys or eyes will be damaged. This can lead to heart attack, stroke, heart failure, kidney disease, erectile dysfunction and loss of vision.

What can I do about about my blood pressure?

Making healthy lifestyle changes is the first step.

- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a healthy diet that is low in saturated and trans fats and rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products .

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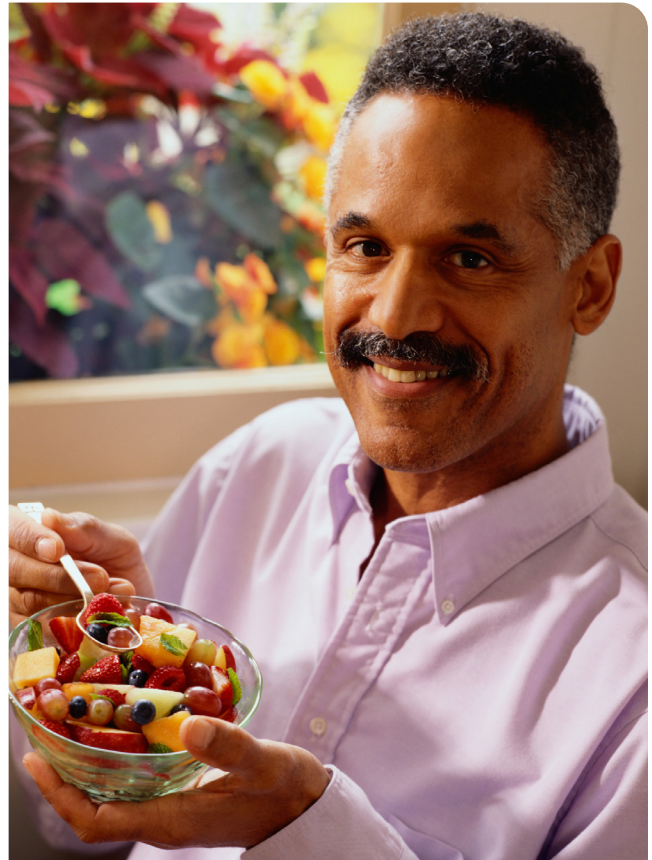
What About African Americans and High Blood Pressure?

- Aim to consume less than 1,500 milligrams (mg) per day of sodium (salt). Even reducing your daily intake by 1000 mg can help.
- Eat high potassium foods. Aim for 3,500 – 5,000 mg of dietary potassium per day.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women or two drinks a day for men.
- Be more physically active. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity per week.

What about medications?

Depending on your risk and blood pressure levels, you may need one or more types of medication in addition to lifestyle changes. In African Americans, thiazide-type diuretics (water pills) and/or calcium channel blockers are more effective in lowering blood pressure when given alone or as initial medicines in a multidrug regimen. You may need a trial period before your health care professional finds the best one, or combination of medications, for you.

If you are prescribed medication, always follow the directions from your health care professional and pharmacist. Don't stop taking the medication unless your health care professional tells you to.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

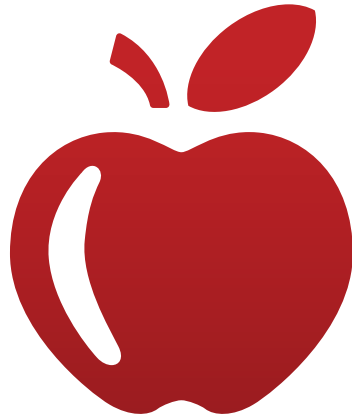
For example:

How is high blood pressure treated?

What type of diet will help?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.



Diet, Nutrition and Well-being



How Do I Change Recipes?

Use recipes with ingredients that are low in saturated fat, sodium and added sugar and rework your favorite recipes with healthier substitutions to cook more healthful meals. There's a lot you can do when you cook and bake to control the amount of saturated and trans fats, sodium and added sugar in your diet. In other words, you can have your cake and eat it, too!



How can I substitute healthier ingredients?

- **Whole Milk** (1 cup) = 1 cup low-fat or fat-free milk + 1 tablespoon nontropical liquid vegetable oil.
- **Heavy Cream** (1 cup) — 1 cup fat-free half-and-half will work for most baking recipes. Try subbing in 1 cup of soy, almond or rice milk.
- **Sour Cream** — Use low-fat or fat-free instead. Or, squeeze some fresh lemon juice into low-fat or fat-free plain Greek yogurt, stir and serve instead of sour cream.
- **Butter** (1 tablespoon) = 2 teaspoons of a nontropical vegetable oil, such as canola, corn or olive.
- **Shortening** (1 cup) = 1 cup unsalted soft margarine made with nonhydrogenated vegetable oil and containing no trans fat. For pies, use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup margarine for every 2 cups flour. To reduce your calories and saturated fat when baking muffins or quick breads, substitute 1 cup unsweetened applesauce for 1 cup of butter, margarine, oil or shortening. The muffins and breads will be denser and moister.
- **Sugar** — Using less sugar for baking is possible and much healthier. For cakes, you'll have a tastier finished product if there's a larger amount of sugar to flour. You'll have more room to reduce the sugar slightly. For cookies in

which you've reduced the sugar, chilling the dough for 30 minutes or up to 7 days before baking helps their flavor remain sweeter. Or, lightly roll the cookie in sugar before or after baking so there's sweetness with the first bite. Be cautious with chocolate cakes and cookies. The bitterness of the cocoa needs sugar for balance.

- **White Flour** — Instead of white, processed flour (all-purpose), try to use whole-wheat or whole-grain flour or whole-wheat pastry flour in your baking. But before you swap, be sure to check the recipe, as the ratio may need to be adjusted.
- **Ground Beef** — Try ground turkey breast in place of beef for chilis, pasta sauces, burgers and casseroles.

How can I use nontropical vegetable oils?

Use small amounts of olive, canola, corn or safflower oil:

- To prepare fish and skinless poultry or to brown lean or extra-lean meats.
- To sauté onions and other vegetables for soups, sauces and casseroles.
- For stir-frying.
- To make popcorn.

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How can I reduce sodium?

For some people, eating too much sodium (salt) can increase the risk of high blood pressure, which can increase the risk of developing heart problems or having a stroke. Most people should aim to consume less than 1,500 milligrams of sodium each day. As a guideline, one teaspoon of table salt has about 2,300 milligrams of sodium.

Here are some tips to help you:

- Use herbs, spices, salt-free seasoning blends, citrus juices and vinegar instead of salt when you cook.
- Avoid flavored salts, such as garlic or onion salt and use garlic or onion powder instead. Choose fresh or frozen vegetables with no added salt or look for low-sodium products.
- Use fat-free, low-sodium broths (either store-bought or homemade) instead of regular. Use 1 packet (which is 1 teaspoon granulated) of salt-free instant bouillon in place of bouillon cubes.
- Read food labels carefully, watching for sodium in the ingredient list. Also, check the Nutrition Facts label. Compare the sodium content of similar food products and choose the one with the lowest sodium content.



Substituting herbs, spices, citrus juices, and vinegar for salt is a great way to reduce sodium while spicing up your meals.

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- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care provider.

For example:

What about eating out?

MY QUESTIONS:

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How Can I Cook Healthfully?

A healthful eating plan means more than just choosing the right foods to eat. It's important to prepare foods in a healthy way. Some ways of cooking are better than others for cutting saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, added sugars and calories. At the same time, you want to maximize your nutritional benefits.

You don't have to give up taste or the main and side dishes you love. Just learn some heart-healthy cooking skills and you can have it all (almost)!



Stir-frying can be a healthy and delicious way to cook! The high temperature cooks the food fast. Stirring the food constantly keeps it from sticking and burning. For vegetables, poultry or seafood, use a nontropical liquid vegetable oil in your stir-fry pan or wok.

What are good ways to cook?

- **Roast** — in the oven with a rack so the meat or poultry doesn't sit in fat drippings. Set at 350 degrees to avoid searing. Baste with liquids like fat-free, low-sodium beef, chicken or vegetable broth, low-sodium tomato juice or fresh lemon juice. Roasting is also a delicious way to prepare seasonal vegetables.
- **Bake** — in the oven in covered or uncovered cookware. When you bake, food cooks slowly with gentle heat. The food's moisture evaporates slowly, enhancing flavor.
- **Braise or Stew** — on top of the stove or in the oven with a little bit of liquid (water or broth). After cooking, you can refrigerate the food. Before reheating, skim off any fat that has become solid on the top.
- **Poach** — by immersing foods, such as skinless chicken, fish or eggs, in simmering liquid.
- **Grill or Broil** — on a rack with high heat.

- **Sauté** — in a skillet or frying pan over direct heat. Use cooking spray or a small amount of canola oil.
- **Stir-fry** — in a wok or stir-fry pan over high heat with a small amount of a nontropical vegetable oil.
- **Microwave** — heat food quickly in a microwaveable dish.
- **Steam** — in a wire basket over simmering water. Steaming can work better than boiling to help some foods keep their shape and texture.

How can I cut saturated fat, sodium and calories without losing taste?

- Add lots of fruits, vegetables and whole grains to your meals. Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. More color equals more nutrients. Make half the grains you eat whole grains. Check the ingredients list and select products with a whole-grain ingredient listed first.
- Include different lean protein foods in your diet. Along with meats, poultry and seafood, dried

(continued)



beans or peas, eggs, soy, nuts and seeds are also in the lean protein group.

- Select lean and extra-lean cuts of meat and trim off any visible fat before cooking. After browning, transfer ground meat to a colander to drain off excess fat. Remove poultry skin before or after cooking (always before serving).
- Choose canned tuna, salmon or sardines packed in water with no added salt or look for brands with the lowest sodium.
- Don't overcook vegetables. Steam or bake them instead of boiling so they keep more of their natural flavor and texture.
- Compare Nutrition Facts labels to find a tasty salad dressing that's lower in calories, saturated fat, sodium and added sugars.
- Use fresh and dried herbs and spices to add flavor to foods.



Instead of boiling vegetables, steam or bake them to keep more of their natural flavor and texture.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care provider.

For example:

What about desserts?

What's a good cookbook with healthy recipes?

MY QUESTIONS:

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What About Eating Out?

It takes time and effort to change eating habits. Most people can't change overnight. Sometimes, it's best to ease into new habits. With time, you can form new, positive eating patterns that will be just as comfortable as your old ones. You'll find that your new, healthy lifestyle will help you look better, feel better and have a healthier heart!

Going out to eat doesn't mean losing control of your eating plan. Think ahead, make smart choices and you can follow a heart-healthy diet almost anywhere you go!



Study the menu before the server comes. Ask how the food is made. And remember, you don't have to finish everything. Ask for a "to go" box.

What should I order?

- When choosing a main dish, pick skinless poultry or fish most often. Limit red and processed meats. Select lean and extra-lean cuts if you choose to eat meat. Many restaurants also offer healthy and delicious meat-free meal options.
- Ask the server to make substitutions. Order steamed vegetables instead of french fries.
- Make sure your entrée is broiled, baked, grilled, steamed or poached instead of fried.
- Order vegetable side dishes. Ask that they be prepared without butter and served without sauce (or sauce on the side, so you can control the amount you eat).
- Ask for salad dressing on the side or a lemon wedge to squeeze over your salad instead of dressing.
- Ask for baked, boiled or roasted potatoes (prepared and served without butter and sour cream) instead of fried.
- Order fresh fruit in place of cake, pie or ice cream for dessert.

- Ask about lower-sodium and other healthier menu choices. Many restaurants now have healthy menus or icons to show healthy options.
- When it seems as if everything on the menu is "off limits," see if the chef will make you a fruit or vegetable platter. Most chefs are happy to.

What should I avoid?

- Ask for soft margarine instead of butter — or allow the natural flavors of the foods to come out without the topping.
- Begin your meal with a salad or broth-based soups like minestrone or gazpacho. Skip the fried appetizers and creamy soups.
- At a salad bar, don't use items high in saturated fat or sodium like cheeses, croutons, bacon bits and creamy salad dressings.
- Take the skin off poultry when it arrives. Remove visible fat from meat if the chef hasn't already done so.

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What about ethnic restaurants?

- At Asian restaurants, order stir-fried chicken or fish with vegetables. A steamed, broiled or boiled main dish is an even better choice. Instead of fried rice, ask for steamed or brown rice. It's healthier to pass on adding soy sauce to your food. You may wish to avoid MSG (monosodium glutamate) because it's a source of sodium (salt). Check with your server to see if it can be left out if it's being used in food preparation. Stick to simpler dishes with ingredients like vegetables, fruits, poultry, seafood and whole grains. You could be less likely to have an issue.
- At Italian restaurants, choose red marinara sauces over white, creamy alfredo ones. Try a fish dish or meatless pasta instead of an entrée made with sausage or meatballs.
- At Mexican restaurants, ask for low-fat sour cream. Opt for soft corn tortillas instead of flour. Avoid refried beans and limit the amount of cheese. Try salads instead of fried foods. Look for fresh seafood on the menu.



When dining at an Asian restaurant, choose the healthier options of steamed or brown rice rather than fried.

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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care provider.

For example:

What can I eat at fast-food restaurants?

How can I control the portions?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit [heart.org/AnswersByHeart](https://www.heart.org/AnswersByHeart) to learn more.



How Do I Follow a Healthy Diet Pattern?

The American Heart Association recommends a healthy eating pattern that emphasizes vegetables, fruits and whole grains. It includes skinless poultry, fish and legumes (beans, peas and lentils); nontropical vegetable oils; and nuts and seeds. Limit your intake of sodium, sweets, sugar-sweetened beverages and red and processed meats. Everything you eat and drink is part of your diet pattern. Make healthy choices today and they'll add up to healthier tomorrows for you!



Vegetables

- Eat a variety of colors and types, especially deeply colored vegetables, such as spinach, carrots and broccoli.
- All vegetables count, including fresh, frozen, canned or dried. Look for vegetables canned in water. For frozen vegetables, choose those without high-calorie sauces or added sodium or sugars.
- Examples of a portion per serving are: 2 cups raw leafy greens; 1 cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetables (about the size of a fist); or 1 cup 100% vegetable juice (no salt added).

Fruits

- Unsweetened fruits are best. Eat a variety of colors and types, especially deeply colored fruits, such as peaches and berries.
- Eat whole fruits to get all the nutrients (such as dietary fiber) that can be missing in some juices.
- Examples of a portion per serving are: 1 medium fruit (about the size of a baseball); ¼ cup unsweetened dried fruit; ½ cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit (unsweetened frozen or canned in its own juice or water); or ½ cup 100% fruit juice.
- For beverages, look for 100% fruit juice. Avoid sugar-sweetened beverages. They're high in calories and low in nutrients.

Whole grains

- At least half of your servings should be high-fiber whole grains. Select items like whole-wheat bread, whole-grain crackers and brown rice. Look at the ingredients list to see that the first ingredient is a whole grain.
- Aim for about 25 grams of fiber from foods each day. Check the Nutrition Facts label for dietary fiber content.
- Examples of a portion per serving are: 1 slice bread; ½ cup hot cereal; 1 cup cereal flakes; or ½ cup cooked rice or pasta (about the size of a baseball).

Protein foods

- Mix up your protein sources. Beyond fish, poultry and lean or extra-lean meats, try eggs and soy products, such as tofu.
- Eat at least 8 ounces of non-fried fish (particularly fatty fish) each week. Fatty fish, such as salmon, mackerel, herring, lake trout, sardines and albacore tuna, are high in omega-3 fatty acids.
- Remove skin from poultry before eating.
- Trim all visible fat from meats before cooking.
- Limit processed red meats, such as bacon, salami, ham, hot dogs and sausage.
- Examples of a portion per serving are: 2 egg whites; ¾ cup cooked, flaked fish; or half a chicken breast. A 3-ounce portion is about the size of a deck of playing cards.

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Nuts, seeds and legumes

- Add many different types of beans (black, kidney, pinto, cannellini and navy, for examples) to your soups, salads and pasta dishes.
- Try sprinkling unsalted, dry-roasted nuts over your salads. Use nuts in stir-fries. Stir them into yogurt.
- Examples of a portion per serving are: ½ ounce unsalted nuts; ½ ounce unsalted seeds; ½ cup cooked legumes (beans, peas, chickpeas or lentils); or 1 tablespoon low-sodium or no-salt-added peanut butter.

Low-fat or fat-free dairy products

- Use low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk. 2% milk is not low fat.
- Choose low-fat or fat-free yogurt with no added sugars.
- Choose low-fat or fat-free cottage cheese. Look for the lowest sodium product you can find.
- Cheeses (low-fat or fat-free) should have no more than 3 grams of fat per ounce and no more than 2 grams of saturated fat per ounce.
- Examples of a portion per serving are: 1 cup milk or yogurt or 1½ ounces fat-free or low-fat cheese (about the size of 3 stacked dice).



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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care provider.

For example:

How many calories should I eat each day?

What's a good cookbook with healthy recipes?

MY QUESTIONS:

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How Do I Understand the “Nutrition Facts” Label?

Most foods in the grocery store have a Nutrition Facts label and ingredient list. When you go grocery shopping, take time to read the Nutrition Facts labels on the foods you purchase. Compare the nutrients and calories in one food to those in another. The information may surprise you. Make sure you aren't buying foods high in calories, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and added sugars!



What information is on the Nutrition Facts label?

The Nutrition Facts label contains this information:

- **Serving size** — tells you how much of the food is considered a “serving.” A package may contain multiple servings. **Servings per container** will tell you the total number of servings in a package or container. If you eat more or less than the serving size listed, you need to do the math to figure out the amount of nutrients and number of calories you've eaten.
- **Calories** — tell you how much energy is in the food. It's important to pay attention to calories if you're trying to lose weight or manage your weight.
- **Total Fat** — is the amount of fat found in one serving of the food. Total fat includes the amount of “bad fats” (saturated and trans) and “good fats” (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated). Fat is higher in calories than protein or carbohydrates. So, cutting back on your fat intake will help you reduce the number of calories you eat.
- **Saturated Fat** — is considered a “bad” fat. Eating too much can raise your cholesterol level (and LDL or bad cholesterol) and your risk of heart disease and stroke. Limit your saturated fat intake to less than 5 to 6% of your total calories. For a person who needs 2,000 calories a day, this is 120 calories or less, or about 13 grams of saturated fat.
- **Trans Fat** — is also considered a “bad fat” because it can raise your LDL cholesterol and your risk of heart disease. Choose foods with “0” grams of trans fat. Read the ingredient list to avoid foods that contain “partially hydrogenated” oils. Everyone can benefit from limiting trans fat.
- **Cholesterol** — is found in foods that come from animals, such as meats, poultry, seafood, eggs and full-fat dairy products. The FDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend eating as little dietary cholesterol as possible within a healthy diet pattern.
- **Sodium** — is in food products as both naturally occurring and added sodium. Salt is sodium chloride. Most people should take in less than 1,500 milligrams of sodium each day. That's equal to a little more than ½ teaspoon of salt.
- **Total Carbohydrates** — are digested and converted into glucose, or sugar, to provide the body's cells with energy. Choose carbohydrate-based foods with high amounts of nutrients. These include vegetables, fruits and whole-grain breads, cereals and pasta.
- **Dietary Fiber** — describes several materials that make up the parts of plants your body can't digest. As part of a healthy diet, soluble fiber can help decrease your risk

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How Do I Understand the “Nutrition Facts” Label?

of heart disease and some types of cancer. Whole grains and fruits and vegetables include dietary fiber. Most refined (processed) grains contain little fiber.

- **Total Sugars** — include both sugars that occur naturally in foods, such as fruit and milk, and sugars that are added to foods and beverages, such as those in desserts, candies and soft drinks.
- **Added Sugars** — is a newer category on the label. The FDA’s Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that less than 10% of your total daily calories come from added sugar. There are lots of different names for “added sugars,” such as sucrose, fructose, glucose, maltose, dextrose, high-fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, concentrated fruit juice and honey. Look at the ingredient list and buy foods and beverages that don’t have a lot of added sugars.
- **Protein** — is one of the components in food that provides us with energy. Animal protein contains saturated fat. Choose fish and skinless poultry. Limit your intake of red and processed meats. Use low-fat or fat-free dairy products. Try other sources of protein, such as beans, nuts, seeds, tofu and other soy-based products.
- **Vitamins and Minerals** — are important parts of your



diet. Eating a variety of foods will help you reach your daily goal of 100% of essential vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin D, calcium, iron and potassium.

- **% Daily Value** — tells you what percentage of each nutrient is in a single serving based on the recommended daily amount. To consume less of a nutrient, choose foods with 5% DV or less. To consume more, choose foods with 20% DV or more.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free e-newsletter for heart patients and their families, at HeartInsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care provider.

For example:

How many calories should I eat each day?

How many grams of saturated fat should I have each day?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.



How Can I Live a Healthier Lifestyle?

It's never too late to start making better health choices. You can live a healthier lifestyle by following Life's Essential 8™, eight steps for improving and maintaining cardiovascular health.

Life's Essential 8 is made up of two areas: health behaviors and health factors.

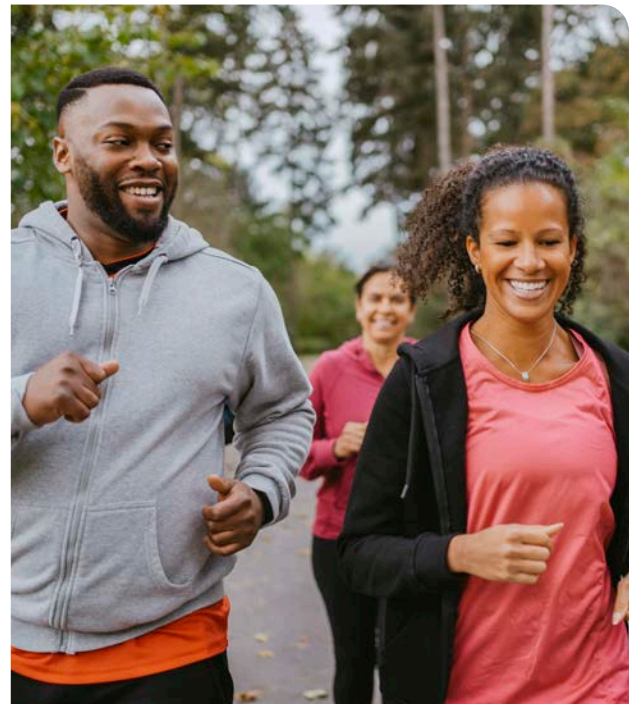
Health behaviors

- Eat better.
- Be more active.
- Quit tobacco.
- Get healthy sleep.

Health factors

- Manage weight.
- Control cholesterol.
- Manage blood sugar.
- Manage blood pressure.

You don't need to tackle these all at once. You can take it one step at a time.



How can I eat better?

Try to make smart choices and swaps to build an overall healthy eating style. Learn how to read and understand food labels to help you make healthier choices.

- Enjoy vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, plant-based proteins, lean animal proteins, skinless poultry, fish and seafood.
- Limit sweetened drinks, alcohol, sodium, red and processed meats, added sugars, full-fat dairy products, highly processed foods, and tropical oils such as coconut oil and palm oil.

How can I be more active?

Adults should aim for 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week, or a combination of both. You should also include muscle-strengthening activity (like resistance or weight training) at least two days a week.

- If you haven't been active, start with 10 to 15 minutes a day and work up to more.
- Find forms of exercise you like and will stick with.

How can I quit tobacco?

You're more likely to quit tobacco for good if you prepare by creating a plan that fits your lifestyle. Here are some steps that may help you:

- Set a quit date.
- Choose a method: cold turkey or gradually.
- Decide if you need help from a health care professional, nicotine replacement or medication.
- Prepare for your quit day by planning how to deal with cravings and urges.
- Quit on your quit day.

How can I get healthy sleep?

Adults should aim for an average of 7-9 hours of sleep a day. Healthy sleep promotes healing, improves brain function and reduces the risk for chronic diseases.

You can make small changes to improve the quality of your sleep by:

- Being physically active during the day to help reduce stress and sleep better.

(continued)



How Can I Live a Healthier Lifestyle?

- Establishing a bedtime routine. Try to go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day.
- Keeping your phone and electronic devices out of the bedroom.

How can I manage my weight?

Understanding how many calories you take in and your activity level can help you identify changes you want to make. To lose weight, you need to burn more calories than you eat.

- Learn about portion sizes, read the nutrition facts label and keep track of what and how much you are eating.
- Sit less and move more to burn more calories. Use an activity tracker to help you gauge how much activity you are getting.

How can I control my cholesterol?

Healthy lifestyle changes, including diet, regular physical activity and weight loss, are a first step in improving your cholesterol.

If lifestyle changes alone aren't enough, your health care professional may prescribe statins or other medications to help control your cholesterol levels.

How can I manage my blood sugar?

You can start by having your health care professional measure your blood sugar levels. If you're diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, you may need to check your blood sugar level daily and monitor your carbohydrate intake.

You can help manage your blood sugar levels by following a healthy diet, being physically active and reaching and maintaining a healthy weight. You also may need medicines to help control your blood sugar or insulin levels.

How can I manage my blood pressure?

Have your blood pressure checked regularly. If your blood pressure is normal (below 120/80 mm Hg), have it checked at least every two years. If it's not, follow your health care professional's advice to control it.

You may need to make lifestyle changes such as not smoking, eating a healthier diet and limiting your sodium (less than 1,500 mg/day) and alcohol intake. You may also need to lose weight and be more physically active. If lifestyle changes alone don't work, medication may be needed.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

What's the most important change I should make first?

How often should I check my blood pressure?

MY QUESTIONS:

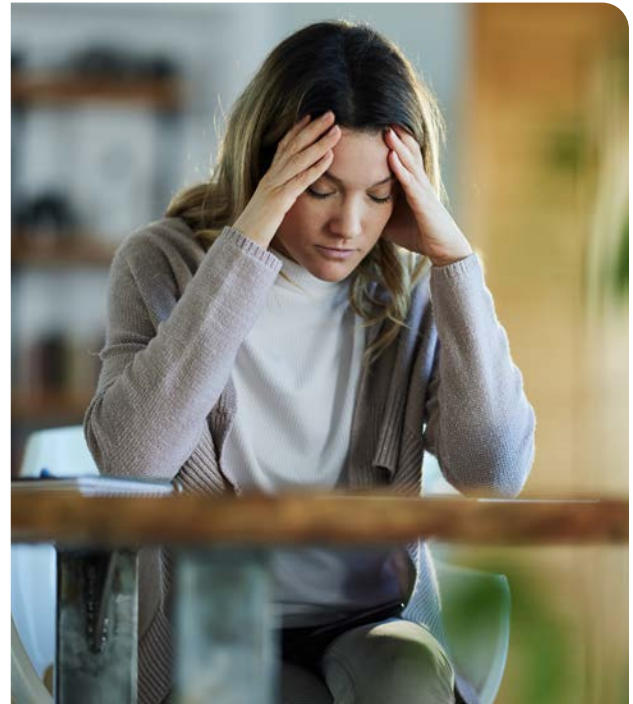
We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit [heart.org/AnswersByHeart](https://www.heart.org/AnswersByHeart) to learn more.

How Can I Manage Stress?

Stress makes your body release a hormone called adrenaline. This hormone can temporarily speed up your breathing and heart rate and raise your blood pressure. These reactions prepare you to deal with the situation — the “fight or flight” response.

Chronic, or long-term, stress is when stress is constant and your body is in high gear on and off for days or weeks at a time. Chronic stress may lead to high blood pressure, which can increase risk for heart attack and stroke.

It’s important to recognize how stress affects you, learn how to deal with it and develop healthy habits to reduce your stress.



How can stress affect me?

Stress affects each of us in different ways. What’s stressful to one person may not be for another. Stress can cause poor health behaviors that are linked to heart disease and stroke. It also can have physical signs and emotional effects.

Stress may contribute to poor health behaviors such as:

- Smoking or smoking more than normal
- Overeating
- Being physically inactive
- Eating an unhealthy diet
- Becoming overweight
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Not taking medications as prescribed

Chronic stress can cause physical and emotional issues, including:

- digestive problems
- anxiety and depression
- headaches

- trouble sleeping
- weight gain
- memory and concentration issues
- high blood pressure

How can I manage stress?

Finding ways to manage stress is important for your physical health and mental well-being. Here are some things that can help you manage stress:

- **Use positive self-talk.** Turn negative thoughts into positive ones. Instead of saying “I can’t do this,” say “I’ll do my best.”
- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity can relieve stress, tension, anxiety and depression. Consider a brisk walk, hike or bike ride.
- **Make time for friends and family.** It’s important to maintain social connections and talk with people you trust.
- **Get enough sleep.** Adults should aim for an average of seven to nine hours a night.

(continued)



How Can I Manage Stress?

- **Practice relaxation techniques.** Try deep breathing while listening to music, meditate or do yoga.
- **Do a hobby you enjoy.** It can be fun and distract you from negative thoughts or worries.

Identify sources of stress in your life and look for ways to reduce and manage them.

How can I reduce the amount of stress in my life?

Everyone gets stressed sometimes, but you can identify effective ways to manage or reduce the amount of stress in your life. Here are some things that may help reduce your daily stress:

- Think ahead about things that might bother you and plan how to deal with them.
- Avoid things that you know cause you stress, such as rush-hour traffic.
- Learn to say “no” if you don’t have time to do something. Don’t promise too much to others.
- Plan your time wisely to get important things done without rushing.
- Stay organized with “to do” lists and tackle big tasks one step at a time.



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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

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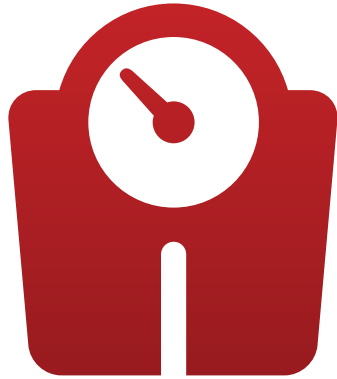
For example:

How can family and friends help?

Are there relaxation techniques you would recommend?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.



Physical Activity and Weight Management



How Can Physical Activity Become a Way of Life?

If you aren't in the habit of being physically active, your health care team is probably telling you to start. That's because regular physical activity can lower your risk for many health conditions. But the benefits don't stop there. You may look and feel better, become stronger and more flexible, have more energy, and reduce stress and tension.

Aim for at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity. Your activity should be spread throughout the week. You should also do muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week.

If you have a chronic condition or disability that prevents you from doing this amount or type of activity, you can still find ways to be physically active based on your abilities.



What can physical activity do for me?

Regular physical activity is associated with lower risk of:

- Heart disease
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- High LDL (bad) total cholesterol
- Weight gain or obesity
- Diabetes

Other benefits include:

- Strengthened lungs, bones and muscles
- Increased energy
- Reduced stress
- Improved sleep
- Feeling better about how you look
- Improved range of motion and balance
- Increased independence

How do I get started?

If physical activity isn't already part of your daily routine, don't worry. There are simple steps you can take to get started.

- Start slowly — don't overdo it! Walking is a great way to start moving more.
- Choose activities you enjoy.
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.
- Use the buddy system! Ask a friend to start a program with you.

What kind of activities should I do?

Small changes you can make to fit in more physical activity include:

- Taking a 10-15 minute break at work to walk
- Using the stairs instead of escalators or elevators
- Parking farther from a store, or getting off the bus early
- Walking or biking instead of driving when you can

(continued)



How Can Physical Activity Become a Way of Life?

Start slowly with light or moderate exercises for short periods and gradually increase the intensity and length of time.

Consider activities such as:

- Hiking
- Jogging
- Biking outside
- Using a stationary bike
- Swimming
- Rowing
- Dancing

Note the days you exercise. Write down the distance or length of time you workout and keep track of how you feel after each session.

You can also improve your activity level at home doing housework, gardening and yardwork.

You don't have to join a gym or buy your own equipment to fit in physical activity. You can take advantage of some of these low- or no-cost local community resources that can offer access to safe places to exercise:

- YMCA
- Community centers or senior centers
- Parks and recreation department
- Faith-based organizations

What will keep me going?

- Identify your exercise preferences — alone or with others, indoors or outdoors — and the best time of day for you.
- Choose activities you enjoy and make sure they're convenient. Have a backup plan for poor weather, such as walking in a mall on rainy days.
- Join an exercise group, health club or local community center. Choose a program that fits your schedule.
- Do different activities each day. Take a brisk walk one day, go swimming the next, and go for a bike ride on the weekend.
- Focus on your progress and don't compare yourself to others. Instead, remember why you started and how far you've come.
- Make physical activity a routine so it becomes a habit.
- Get your family involved! It's easier to build healthy habits together.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

Are there activities that I should avoid?

What's the best type of physical activity for me?

MY QUESTIONS:

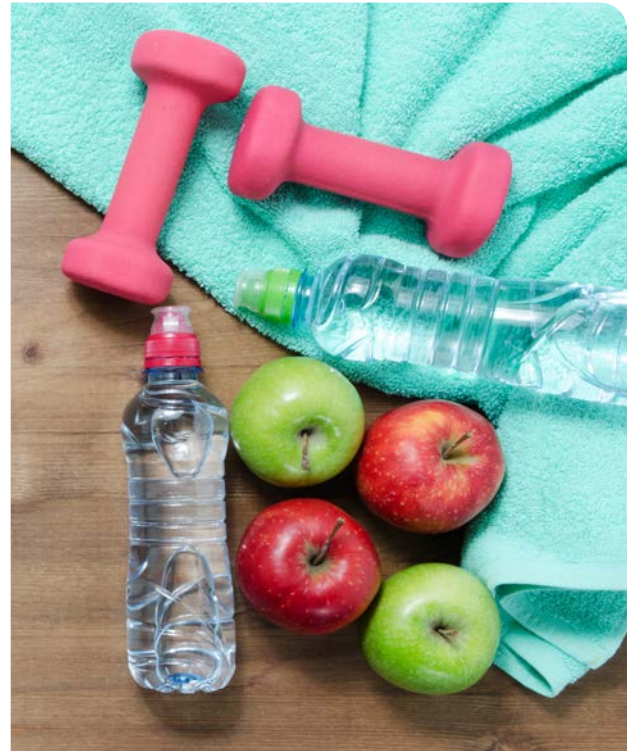
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How Can I Lose Weight?

It's important to reach and maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight or obese can increase your chance of developing conditions that are risk factors for heart disease. These include high blood pressure, high LDL (bad) cholesterol, low HDL (good) cholesterol, diabetes and sleep apnea. You're also at greater risk of stroke, atrial fibrillation and heart failure.

You may have tried to lose weight before without long-term success. Be assured, you're not alone. To lose weight, you must take in fewer calories than you use up through normal metabolism and physical activity. The key is to create healthy eating and exercise plans that provide the right balance of calories, nutrition and regular physical activity.



What are some steps to successful weight loss?

It's easy to start a nutrition or exercise plan. But sticking to it can be hard. Prepare yourself by setting goals, thinking ahead and deciding how to deal with roadblocks.

- **Decide how much weight you should lose.** You may want to start with a goal to lose 5% to 10% of your body weight and keeping it off. Then, create eating and physical activity plans that will subtract enough calories for you to lose one to two pounds a week.
- **Set realistic goals.** Don't let unreasonable expectations set you up to fail. Allow yourself enough time to reach your goal.
- **Work with an expert.** It's never wise to follow fad diets, go without eating or try to lose weight too fast. Talk to a nutritionist or registered dietitian about creating an eating plan that's right for you.
- **Decide how to handle temptation.** Plan how you'll react in settings where you may be tempted to have foods that aren't part of your eating plan. Look up restaurant menus before you go out to eat so you can select a meal that fits into your nutrition plan.

- **Plan ahead.** If a bad mood, stress or boredom make you want to eat a lot, decide in advance of these emotions what you'll do instead of eating. You could go for a walk, call a friend or read a book.
- **Expect setbacks.** If you go off your diet, don't quit. Instead, focus on getting back on track.
- **Be more active.** Getting more physical activity is good for your heart, and it can help you lose weight, too. Aim for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or a combination of both.

How should I change my eating habits?

Follow these simple guidelines to make good food choices.

- Eat a diet rich in vegetables, fruits and whole-grain foods.
- Eat healthy sources of lean protein, mostly from plants.
- Eat skinless poultry, fish, legumes, nontropical vegetable oils and nuts.
- Limit your intake of red and processed meats.

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- Limit how much saturated fats are in your food. Avoid trans fats.
- Select fat-free or low-fat dairy products.
- Limit beverages and foods high in calories and low in nutrition, such as sugar-sweetened soft drinks and processed foods with added sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Look for lower sodium options for prepared and packaged foods.
- Drink alcohol only in moderation. If you don't drink, don't start.
- Cook foods in healthier ways, such as baking, boiling, broiling, grilling, roasting or stewing. Don't fry foods in oil.
- Read food labels and avoid foods high in added sugars, saturated and trans fats, sodium and calories.

What else can I do?

- Keep an exercise log and a food diary to track your physical activity and eating habits. Use your entries to understand your choices and set short- and long-term goals.
- Learn what motivates you. Losing the first few pounds is exciting. Find a way to turn that enthusiasm into the willpower to stick with it.
- Celebrate as you achieve short- and long-term goals.



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- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

How much weight should I lose?

What type of physical activity is best for me?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.



How Can I Manage My Weight?

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight can be difficult. If you have tried to lose weight without much long-term success, you are not alone. But it's never too late to try again. Research shows that weight loss can benefit your health for up to five years afterward, even if you start to regain weight.

There is no magic weight-loss formula that works for everyone. The key is to find a plan that works for you and balances the calories you eat with the amount of your regular physical activity.



What are the keys to healthy weight loss?

To lose weight, you must take in fewer calories than you use through normal metabolism and physical activity. To do this, you should:

- Watch what and how much you eat.
- Choose nutritious foods.
- Follow an overall healthy diet pattern.
- Get and stay physically active.
- Drink enough water.
- Get enough sleep.

How can I make better food choices?

- Make sure you eat the right amount of food and get enough exercise to keep your body at a healthy weight.
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables and try different kinds.
- Choose whole-grain foods, such as whole wheat bread, instead of refined grains, like white bread.
- Pick healthy sources of protein, such as beans, nuts, fish, chicken, lean meats and low-fat dairy products.
- Use non-tropical oils, such as olive, canola, corn or sunflower oils, instead of butter and lard.

- Limit the number of sugary foods and drinks you have.
- Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt.
- Limit how much alcohol you drink to one drink per day for women and two for men. If you don't drink, don't start.

How can I stay at a healthy weight?

Maintaining weight loss can take just as much effort as losing it. Remember that maintaining a healthy weight is a long-term commitment.

The first year or two after significant weight loss may be challenging but sticking with it increases your chances of long-term success. To avoid sliding back into old habits:

- Get support from your friends, family and health care professionals.
- Find ways to motivate yourself, such as setting rewards or goals that keep you on track.
- Move more and sit less. Stay active by doing activities that make your heart beat faster, such as walking. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity each week.
- Set realistic goals. Break your goals into smaller, achievable steps.

(continued)



How Can I Manage My Weight?

- Keep track of what and when you eat using a food diary or an app. This can help you see patterns and make better choices.
- Control how much you eat by understanding the difference between a portion and a serving. Try to have reasonable portions to avoid overeating.
- Make smart food choices by learning about healthier alternatives and simple swaps for your favorite foods.
- Always keep healthy snacks around. Fruits, vegetables and whole grains can keep you satisfied.
- Eat unhealthy foods in smaller amounts and less often.
- Use a shopping list, and don't shop when you're hungry.
- Plan all your meals. When you're going to a party or out to eat, decide ahead of time what you can do to make it easier to eat right.
- When you're hungry between meals, drink a glass of water or eat a small piece of fruit.
- When you really crave a high-calorie food, eat a small amount of it.



What if I go back to old habits?

Old habits are hard to break. You might have a bad day and overeat or skip exercise. If that happens, remember that this is not a failure. Instead, recommit yourself to starting again and getting back on track. You can do it!

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

- What if I start gaining weight again?**
- How can my family help me?**

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.

How Can I Monitor My Cholesterol, Blood Pressure and Weight?

High cholesterol, high blood pressure and being overweight or obese are major risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

High blood pressure and high cholesterol are dangerous but have no warning signs. You should schedule regular tests with your doctor's office to make sure your levels are OK. Also talk to your doctor about the healthiest weight for you.

It's important to know your numbers. You can record your blood pressure, cholesterol and weight in the table below to track your progress. Talk to your doctor about your numbers and how they affect your overall risk. Then ask how often to check your levels.



Date						
Blood Pressure (mm Hg)						
Total Cholesterol (mg/dL)						
LDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)						
HDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)						
Triglycerides (mg/dL)						
Weight (pounds)						



How Can I Monitor My Cholesterol, Blood Pressure and Weight?

What can I do to lower my cholesterol and blood pressure?

- Eat a heart-healthy diet low in saturated and trans fats, sodium and added sugars. A healthy diet includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, skinless poultry, fish/seafood, legumes (beans and peas), nontropical vegetable oils and nuts.
- Eat at least 8 ounces of non-fried fish each week, particularly fatty fish like salmon.
- Limit red meats. If you eat red meats, select lean cuts of meat. Trim all visible fat and throw away the fat that cooks out of the meat.
- Substitute meatless or “low-meat” dishes for regular entrees.
- Aim to consume less than 1,500 mg per day of sodium. Even reducing your daily intake by 1,000 mg per day can help. Limit your intake of processed, packaged and fast foods, which can be high in sodium.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. If you’re a woman, have no more than one drink a day. If you’re a man, have no more than two drinks a day.
- Be physically active. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of

vigorous activity a week (or a combination of both).

- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Don’t smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Take your medicines as prescribed by your health care professional.

How can I manage my weight?

Lifestyle changes such as the ones listed above may help you lose 3% to 5% of your body weight. This could result in meaningful health benefits. Larger weight losses (5% to 10%) can produce even greater benefits. To lose weight, you must take in fewer calories than you use up through normal metabolism and physical activity. The goal is to reduce the number of calories you eat and increase your physical activity.

- Get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week.
- To maintain weight loss or reduce how much you regain, some people need more physical activity each week (200-300 minutes).

If you can’t lose weight on your own, talk to a doctor, registered dietitian (R.D.) or licensed nutritionist. You can work together to create a healthy weight-loss plan.

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Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

What kind of physical activity should I do?

What is a healthy weight for me?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.

Support the Fight Against Heart Disease and Stroke

Your donation to the American Heart Association is a powerful stand against the nation's top killers: heart disease and stroke. With every gift, you help fund critical research, advocate for healthier communities, improve patient care, and promote equitable health.

Make a Lifesaving Impact

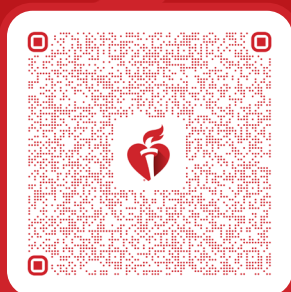
Your support fuels scientific breakthroughs and lifesaving prevention programs. By joining hands with us, you're not just donating; you're creating a healthier, longer future for everyone.

Together, We Can Overcome

Join the movement towards a world without cardiovascular disease. Every donation brings us closer to a future where everyone enjoys a healthier life.

Donate Now and Help Save Lives

Your generosity makes a difference. Let's beat heart disease and stroke together.



**Donate
today**

Click here or
scan the QR code



American
Heart
Association.