



A Healthier You
with a Healthier Heart!
Every Day and In a Public
Health Emergency



Heart SELF CARE

IT MAKES **ALL** THE DIFFERENCE



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Take Care of Your Heart



The heart is celebrated as the source of courage, empathy, and intuition. The Purple Heart is given to soldiers for bravery. In poetry, song and everyday speech, following your heart has meant being true to yourself.

Your heart deserves your attention and loving care. Whether you are healthy and athletic or have symptoms of heart disease, knowing how to take care of your heart can make all the difference in your future. The food you eat, the activities you choose and your knowledge can support your heart and keep you healthier, happier and more active.

The Heart of the Matter

The human heart works day and night, year in and year out, never stopping. A small powerhouse, your heart beats 100,000 times a day, pumping blood through a system of arteries, veins and capillaries that is 60,000 miles long. It carries fresh oxygen and nutrients from the lungs to every cell in your body and then carries blood back to the heart and lungs to be purified.

Why You Should Know About Heart Disease

Cardiovascular disease, which includes heart disease, hypertension and stroke, is the leading cause of death for men and women in the U.S. If you have not had a problem with your heart, learn how to keep it healthy and know the symptoms that indicate when to seek medical advice. If you have cardiovascular disease, you can live a healthier, more active life by learning about your disease and treatments and by becoming an active participant in your care.

Women and Heart Disease

In a 2000 national Heart Association survey, only 34% of women identified heart disease as a leading cause of death. Yet, cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women, causing the death of a half million women in the U.S. each year. Women are 15% more likely than men to die of a heart attack. And they are twice as likely to have a second heart attack in the six years following the first.



Know the Symptoms

The most common symptom of heart disease is angina. Angina can be described as discomfort, heaviness, pressure, aching, burning, fullness, squeezing or painful feelings in your chest. It can be mistaken for indigestion. Angina may also be felt in the shoulders, arms, neck, throat, jaw or back. There are other symptoms to watch for, including:

- **Shortness of breath**
- **A faster heartbeat, irregular heartbeats or a pounding in your chest**
- **Dizziness, nausea or sweating**
- **Fullness, indigestion or a choking feeling which may feel like heartburn**
- **Extreme weakness, fatigue or anxiety**
- **Fainting**
- **Swelling of your ankles, legs, feet or abdomen**
- **Quick weight gain**

PREVENT Heart Disease

Know your blood pressure and cholesterol.

Luckily, the same actions work to reduce cholesterol, ease blood pressure, and maintain health: stop smoking, eat wisely, drink less alcohol, exercise more and learn to relax.

Cholesterol

High levels of fat in the blood can cause hardening of the arteries. A simple blood test can determine your levels of good cholesterol (HDL), bad cholesterol (LDL) and triglycerides. Have your doctor check your cholesterol once a year.

Be informed about your heart



Blood Pressure

The American Heart Association recommends blood pressures of less than 130/85 for people who have heart disease and less than 130/80 for people with diabetes.

Diabetes

People with undiagnosed diabetes are at risk for heart disease, a heart attack and stroke. Over five million Americans have undiagnosed diabetes! If you are over 45, you should be tested for diabetes.

You *Can* Change Your Life...

Lifestyle changes take dedication and discipline. It is possible to quit smoking, eat right, start an exercise program and ease stress. Make sure you have understanding and encouragement from your friends and family. Seek the help of support groups. Talk to your doctor about joining a cardiac rehabilitation program. Find a buddy who needs to make similar changes. Set goals together. Talk to each other about how to overcome obstacles and celebrate small victories.

Changing your diet

- **It is a challenge – one that has many rewards.** You will feel happier and better – and look great, too. Be sure to recognize that even small changes are a reason to congratulate yourself!
- **Keep track of your weight and your waistline.** Weigh yourself regularly on the same scale. Use a tape measure to measure your waist.
- **Pace yourself.** If you are moving toward your goals by making just a few changes, that is great. Keep it up.
- **Add new foods.** Think in terms of what you'd like to add to your life. Don't stop eating all of the foods you like. Focus on eating more healthy food instead of eating less unhealthy food. It's easier and more fun to add a new behavior than to stop an old one.
- **Shop smart to eat smart.** Avoid processed foods that are high in salt and fat. Instead, keep fruits and cut up veggies where you can see them first when you open the fridge.
- **Read food labels.** Know what you are eating.

Control stress

Stress isn't just uncomfortable, it's unhealthy. When you are stressed, hormones change your body chemistry. Stress hormones can contribute to depression, anxiety and helplessness as well as loss of sex drive or appetite. Stress can raise your heart rate, blood pressure and cholesterol.



Chill Out!

Here are activities to lower stress, raise your mood, calm your mind, and help you relax.

- **Listening to music is the number one calming activity worldwide.** Researchers have found that music can produce alpha brain waves similar to those found during meditation. Try classical music or your own favorites!
- **Laugh** – Studies discovered that laughter can boost immunity, reduce pain and even lower the risk of heart attacks. So kick back, watch a funny video and relax.
- **Socialize** – Friends are great medicine...and they decrease stress.
- **Breathe deeply** – right into your stomach. Shallow breathing stimulates anxiety. Deep breathing restores calm.
- **Say "No!"** Don't let yourself get burdened with too many obligations, meetings, and activities. Say no and save time for yourself. You deserve it.
- **Take a walk** – Walking, swimming and other aerobic activities relieve stress and make you healthier.
- **Meditate** – In a Canadian study, those who meditated for seven weeks had decreased stress, depression, anxiety and anger.

READY!

Heart Self Care for a Public Health Emergency

In New Mexico, it's not unusual to have a summer forest fire or a winter storm disrupt everyday life. Everyone is now advised to have a plan in place in case of an emergency. People with heart disease must consider their special health needs when they make emergency plans.

Be Prepared

- **Be ready to identify yourself as having heart disease.**
- **Emergencies can disrupt routines.** Remember to take your pills as prescribed by your doctor.
- **Make sure you have necessary medical supplies** such as blood-pressure monitoring equipment.
- **Carry a list of your medications** with you for emergencies.
- **If you receive ongoing medical care,** talk with your health care provider about plans to continue care during an emergency. Ask for a list of medical conditions, their treatment and the names and doses of your medications.

Forest Fires & Floods

New Mexico's forest fires and floods can be dangerous if you have heart and lung disease. Smoke can hurt your eyes, irritate your respiratory system, and intensify chronic heart and lung problems. People with heart disease may experience chest pain, rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath or fatigue. Floods increase the likelihood of mold, which can be a health hazard to those with heart disease.

- **To protect yourself from smoke, limit exposure.** Pay attention to air quality reports. Keep indoor air as clean as possible. Keep windows and doors closed and run an air conditioner. If you do not have one, seek shelter elsewhere.
- **To protect yourself from mold, block off moldy areas of the house.** If you clean up, wear goggles, rubber gloves and an N-95 respirator. Throw away cleaning clothes and rags – mold spores can continue to cause problems to those who are vulnerable.
- **Dust masks are not enough.** Use a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter to reduce breathing problems.

Put ICE in Your Phone!

In Case of Emergency

In an accident or emergency, first responders are now trained to check your cell phone for an emergency contact person, listed under the heading ICE.

Why not put ICE in your phone now? It only takes a few seconds and it could help save your life.

Simply select "new contact" and enter ICE and the number of the contact person.



Up to You: Living with Heart Disease

If you have heart disease, it is essential to take care of your heart, especially if you have had surgery to improve blood flow to the heart.

- **Recognize emergency symptoms.** Call your doctor or 911 if symptoms become frequent or severe. **Do not wait to get help!**
- **Take your medications.** Follow your doctor's instructions and know why you are taking each medication.
- **See your doctor for regular check-ups.** Schedule regular appointments, even if you have no symptoms. Describe new symptoms or problems, especially chest pain, weight change, swelling ankles or less energy.
- **Investigate and understand your care.** Learn about your medicines and how they reduce your symptoms. Take them correctly. Consult your pharmacist about your medication plan.
- **Eat well!** Switch to lowfat dairy and milk products. Try to eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol and no more than 2400 milligrams of sodium a day. Transfats, often found in processed and fried foods, are dangerous for your heart.
- **Exercise!** Try taking a walk with music or an audio book. Or walk with a friend. Swimming, hiking, dancing or biking will make you feel better, look trimmer and improve your health.
- **Depression management.** If you feel sad, hopeless or helpless, remember that depression is treatable. Seek professional help.
- **Flu and Pneumonia Vaccine.** For people who have heart disease, flu and pneumonia can be much more serious. Vaccines lower the risk.

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