



# February Health Promotion Toolbox

## Daily Health Tips

**Tip!** Access more information and tools and resources to learn more about heart health and how you can achieve a healthy heart by clicking on the blue, underlined hyperlinked text throughout the document.



### A Healthy Lifestyle = A Healthy Heart

- [Heart disease](#) is a build-up of fatty plaque in your arteries. Plaque build-up restricts blood flow, which can eventually lead to chest pain, blood clots, heart attack, and stroke.
- [Heart disease is not just your father's problem](#). While heart disease is often viewed as something to worry about when you get older, about six in 10 preventable heart disease and stroke deaths happen to people under age 65.<sup>1</sup>
- You [should care about heart disease right now](#) because your unhealthy behaviors can cause structural damage to your heart. Heart disease is the #1 killer of men and women in the US.<sup>2</sup>
- [Know Your Risk!](#) Risk factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, unhealthy diet, obesity, physical inactivity, and elevated “[bad](#)” cholesterol, which can build-up in the arteries causing them to narrow. Blocked arteries may lead to heart disease or stroke.<sup>3</sup>
- See if you are at risk of heart disease by taking [this assessment](#).
- Decrease your risk of suffering from cardiovascular disease by [living healthy](#): stop using tobacco, increase fruit and vegetable intake, be active, and maintain a healthy weight.
- You can also work with your health care professional to develop a plan with specific actions to reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke.



### Hypertension Affects Cardiovascular Fitness & Mission Readiness

- [Hypertension](#), or high blood pressure, is when the blood moves through the vessels at an elevated level so it's pushing against the walls of the arteries.<sup>4</sup> Stress on the artery walls can seriously damage vital organs like your heart, and potentially cause heart disease.
- Hypertension is a disease that reduces cardiovascular fitness, compromising your mission readiness and personal health.
- Hypertension also leads to [other health problems](#) that raise your risk for heart disease, stroke, and heart attack.





- Hypertension does not have any warning signs or symptoms, so [you may not realize you have it](#). Have your health care professional measure it for you; it's quick and painless!
- [Know your numbers!](#) Healthy blood pressure is less than 120/80.<sup>5</sup>
- Keep your blood pressure level in check by eating a [nutritious diet](#) low in saturated fats and salt, taking part in moderate to vigorous [physical activity](#) most days of the week, maintaining a [healthy weight](#), drinking alcohol in moderation, and quitting [tobacco products](#).

## **Prevent Diabetes: A Risk Factor for Heart Disease**

- Type 2 diabetes is a condition in which insulin is unable to work effectively. When you eat, your food is eventually converted to glucose (a form of sugar) in the blood stream. Insulin helps in the transfer of glucose from the blood stream into body cells for energy.<sup>6</sup> When the body is resistant to insulin, excess glucose collects in the bloodstream, which weakens arteries and may cause heart disease.<sup>6</sup>
- Consuming more calories than you need will result in weight gain and increased body fat. Increased body fat makes you more resistant to insulin, which results in high glucose levels eventually leading to a diagnosis of diabetes. However, if you lose the weight and maintain a healthy weight, you [cut your chances of developing type 2 diabetes](#) in half.
- Diabetes is considered to be a major controllable risk factor for heart disease<sup>7</sup> because good diabetes management involves healthful lifestyle behaviors such as healthy eating habits and an active lifestyle to keep glucose levels within an acceptable range thereby minimizing potential damage to arteries, blood vessels and the heart.
- Take steps now to avoid developing diabetes by achieving or maintaining a [healthy weight](#), [improving diet](#), and increasing [physical activity](#).<sup>7</sup>
- See your doctor if you often feel tired, thirsty, and urinate frequently – these are signs of [high glucose levels](#).
- If you are 10-15 lbs. overweight, modest weight loss and regular physical activity can [reduce your risk](#) of diabetes dramatically.
- If you have prediabetes, you can decrease your risk of developing diabetes by engaging in at least [150 minutes of physical activity each week](#).

## **Daily Behaviors for a Healthy Heart**

- You can improve your heart health at any age through behaviors that include a nutritious diet, moderate to vigorous physical activity most days of the week, maintaining a healthy weight, and living a tobacco free lifestyle.





- Start logging what you eat and drink by utilizing online tools, such as the NMCPHC “[Tracker to Identify Your Food Triggers](#)” food log.
- Consume less than [1,500 milligrams of sodium](#) each day; sodium (salt) can increase your blood pressure.
- Make small changes to your diet. Select low-fat or fat-free dairy products, lean meats, and poultry without skin. Cook by baking, broiling, boiling, or grilling instead of frying to reduce total fat, trans-fats, and saturated fats. [Find recipes](#).
- Cut back on foods high in [dietary cholesterol](#), such as heavily marbled (Prime cuts) or processed red meats and full-fat dairy products.
- [Quit smoking!](#) Within two years of quitting, the risk of cardiovascular disease is substantially reduced, and after 15 years the risk returns to that of a non-smoker!
- Learn how to [develop a positive fitness mindset](#) for active living.

## Resources

<sup>1</sup> Vital Signs: Preventable Deaths from Heart Disease & Stroke. [http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/vital\\_signs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/vital_signs.htm). Updated 13 March 2014. Accessed December 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Heart Disease Facts. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>. Updated 29 October 2014. Accessed December 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Cholesterol Fact Sheet. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/fs\\_cholesterol.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_cholesterol.htm). Updated 26 July 2013. Accessed December 2014.

<sup>4</sup> High Blood Pressure Fact Sheet. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/fs\\_bloodpressure.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_bloodpressure.htm). Updated 3 January 2014. Accessed December 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Know Your Numbers. Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center. <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/general-tools-and-programs/hp-toolbox/Know-your-Numbers.pdf>. Accessed December 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Facts About Type 2. American Diabetes Association. <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/type-2/facts-about-type-2.html>. Published 1 August 2013. Updated 9 October 2014. Accessed January 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Cardiovascular Disease & Diabetes. American Heart Association. [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Diabetes/WhyDiabetesMatters/Cardiovascular-Disease-Diabetes\\_UCM\\_313865\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Diabetes/WhyDiabetesMatters/Cardiovascular-Disease-Diabetes_UCM_313865_Article.jsp). Updated 31 January 2013. Accessed December 2014. <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/type-2/facts-about-type-2.html>

