



February is Heart Health Month

Plan of the Day Notes

1. Heart disease and stroke are the leading killers worldwide, but the risk of both can be reduced through healthy lifestyles. Every risk factor you eliminate or reduce, such as stopping or decreasing tobacco use, increasing fruit and vegetable intake, and maintaining a healthy weight, lessens your chance of developing cardiovascular disease.
2. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of disability. Almost 600,000 people die of heart disease in the U.S. each year. That is about 25% of all U.S. deaths. Heart disease is a term that includes several more specific heart conditions. The most common heart disease in the United States is coronary heart disease, or plaque build-up in the arteries, which can lead to heart attack.
3. [Know Your Risk!](#) Risk factors for heart disease and stroke include high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol (LDL), diabetes, smoking, unhealthy diet, obesity, and physical inactivity. Taken together, these major risk factors account for around 80% of deaths from heart disease and stroke.
4. To estimate your level of risk for cardiovascular disease, complete the cardiovascular risk assessment at <http://cvdrisk.nhlbi.nih.gov/calculator.asp>. Once you know your overall risk, work with your healthcare professional to develop a plan with specific actions to reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke.
5. According to the American Heart Association, high blood pressure (or hypertension) is the number one risk factor for stroke and a major risk factor for heart disease. It affects nearly one billion people around the world. Each year at least 7.1 million people die as a direct result of high blood pressure. High blood pressure can have no visible symptoms, which is why it is oftencalled the “silent killer.” The only way to diagnose hypertension is to be checked by your healthcare professional. The good news is that it is easy to detect and usually controllable with lifestyle changes and/or medication.
6. Physical inactivity increases the risk of developing heart disease, even in the absence of other risk factors. To promote cardiovascular health, strive for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week.
7. Consumption of at least five servings a day of fruits and vegetables has been shown to produce a [17% reduction in coronary heart disease risk](#).
8. Sodium chloride, also known as seas salt or table salt, increases average levels of blood pressure. Some individuals have greater blood pressure responses to salt than others.



As part of an overall healthy diet, the American Heart Association recommends Americans should consume no more than about 1,500 milligrams of salt (sodium chloride) per day. Avoid the common misconception that sea salt is nutritionally superior to table salt; both contain the same amount of sodium and have the same nutritional value.

9. [Quit smoking!](#) Within two years of quitting, the risk of CVD is substantially reduced, and 15 years after quitting the risk of CVD returns to that of a non-smoker.
10. Small changes to your diet can make a big difference. Select fat-free, 1% fat, and low-fat dairy products and choose lean meats and poultry without skin. Cook meats by baking, pan-frying in olive oil, or grilling instead of deep-frying to reduce trans-fats and saturated fats.
11. Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, such as french fries and baked goods, to reduce trans-fat in your diet.
12. Cut back on foods high in dietary cholesterol, such as processed red meats and full-fat dairy products. The American Heart Association recommends consuming less than 300 mg of cholesterol each day.
13. Cut back on beverages and foods with added sugars. Some of the offenders are relatively well-known, such as soda, but don't forget to read nutrition labels. A six ounce container of a popular vanilla non-fat Greek yogurt has 18 grams, or approximately four and a half teaspoons, of sugar!
14. Choose foods that have no added salt, such as fresh fruits and vegetables versus canned or processed items. Add little or no salt when preparing foods.
15. If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation. That means no more than one drink per day if you are a woman and two drinks per day if you are a man.
16. Choose liquid oils that are high in unsaturated fats -- like canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, sesame, soybean, and sunflower oils.
17. Buy margarine made with unsaturated liquid vegetable oils as the first ingredient. Choose soft tub or liquid margarine or vegetable oil spreads or sprays instead of butter or stick margarine to avoid trans-fats and saturated fats.
18. Dining out doesn't mean you can't eat healthy. Check out the [ChooseMyPlate.gov](#) tips for eating healthy when eating out.
19. You do not have to become a gym rat to get in your exercise! Check out these easy ways to [increase your physical activity](#) at home, at work, and at play.
20. Logging what you eat and drink with online tools, like the United States Department of Agriculture's [SuperTracker](#), is a great way to manage weight. It also offers helpful tips on how to [overcome common barriers](#) to recording intake.