



February Health Promotion Toolbox

Daily Heart Health Facts and Tips



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.¹
- [Heart disease is a topic for adults of any age, including young adults](#). 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 65.²
- You [should care about heart disease right now](#) because unhealthy behaviors when you're young can cause structural damage to your heart. Heart disease is the #1 killer of men and women in the United States.¹
- [Know Your Risk!](#) Risk factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, diabetes, tobacco use, 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.³
- See if you are at risk of having a heart attack 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 blood moves through the vessels at an elevated level so it's pushing against the walls of the arteries.⁴ 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 120/80.⁵





- 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 less [alcohol](#), and quitting the use of [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.⁶ When the body is resistant to insulin, excess glucose collects in the bloodstream, which weakens arteries and may cause heart disease.⁶
- Consuming more calories than you need will result in weight gain and increased body fat. Increased body fat can keep your body from making insulin correctly, which results in high glucose levels and may eventually lead to a diagnosis of diabetes.⁷ However, if you lose excess 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 because it is often accompanied by other conditions that increase the risk for cardiovascular disease. Good diabetes management involves healthy lifestyle behaviors such as healthy eating habits and an active lifestyle.⁸ These behaviors keep glucose levels within an acceptable range and help manage additional risk factors, which minimize 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](#).⁸
- 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 dramatically [reduce your risk](#) of diabetes.
- 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, healthy weight, and a tobacco free lifestyle.



- Start logging what you eat and drink by utilizing online tools or the NMCPHC “[Tracker to Identify Your Food Triggers](#)” food log.
- Consume less than [2,300 milligrams of sodium](#) each day; sodium (for example, salt) can increase your blood pressure.⁹ You may need to consume less sodium based on your [age](#) and other risk factors, such as [high blood pressure](#).¹⁰
- 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.
- Cut back on foods high in [dietary cholesterol](#), such as heavily marbled (Prime cuts) or processed red meats and full-fat dairy products.
- [Quit tobacco!](#) Within one year of quitting smoking, the risk of a heart attack is reduced. It is never too late to quit.
- Learn how to [develop a positive fitness mindset](#) for active living.

References

¹ Heart Disease Facts. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>. Updated 10 August 2015. Accessed December 2015.

² Vital Signs: Preventable Deaths from Heart Disease & Stroke. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/vital_signs.htm. Updated 13 March 2014. Accessed December 2015.

³ Cholesterol Fact Sheet. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_cholesterol.htm. Updated 30 April 2015. Accessed December 2015.

⁴ High Blood Pressure Fact Sheet. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_bloodpressure.htm. Updated 19 February 2015. Accessed December 2015.

⁵ Measuring Blood Pressure. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/measure.htm>. Updated 13 November 2015. Accessed December 2015.

⁶ Facts About Type 2. American Diabetes Association. <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/type-2/facts-about-type-2.html>. Updated 27 October 2015. Accessed December 2015.

⁷ Preventing Diabetes. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/prevention.html>. Updated 30 September 2015. Accessed December 2015.

⁸ Cardiovascular Disease & Diabetes. American Heart Association. http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Diabetes/WhyDiabetesMatters/Cardiovascular-Disease-Diabetes_UCM_313865_Article.jsp. Updated August 2015. Accessed December 2015.

⁹ Most Americans Should Consume Less Sodium. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/salt/>. Updated 19 January 2016. Accessed January 2016.

¹⁰ Controlling Blood Pressure. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/control.htm>. Updated 7 July 2014. Accessed January 2016.