



February Health Promotion Toolbox

Heart Health

Plan of the Week

Week 1

Take steps now to adopt a healthier lifestyle to keep your heart healthy and avoid heart disease. 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 65.¹ [Heart disease is a topic for adults of any age, including young adults](#); you can [take steps now](#) to reduce your risk of developing this disease which can negatively affect your military career and compromise mission readiness. Combat heart disease by properly fueling your body through a [nutritious diet](#) that is low in saturated fat and sodium, taking part in moderate to vigorous [physical activity](#) most days of the week, maintaining a [healthy weight](#), drinking moderate [amounts of alcohol](#), and [quitting tobacco](#), including [spit tobacco](#) and [e-cigarettes](#).² Take part in the [Daily Heart Health Facts and Tips activity](#) to learn a new fact or tip about heart health each day this month and get on track for life-long heart health.

Week 2

Learn about the impacts of hypertension, how to check your blood pressure regularly, and how to follow up on potential risk, so that you maintain good cardiovascular fitness and stay mission ready. [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.³ Hypertension can cause stress on the artery walls, seriously damaging organs such as your heart, potentially causing heart disease, stroke, or heart attack. The good news is that hypertension is easy to detect by having your blood pressure checked during a doctor's visit, at your pharmacy, or from a home blood pressure monitoring device – all options are quick and painless! Hypertension is usually controllable with [lifestyle changes](#). But beware, hypertension does not have any warning signs or symptoms, so [you may not realize you have it](#). [Know your numbers](#) and talk to your health care provider to determine if you are at risk.



Week 3

Increase physical activity and adopt healthier eating habits to avoid developing diabetes, a major controllable risk factor for heart disease.² [Type 2 diabetes](#) is a condition in which insulin is unable to work effectively.⁴ When the body is resistant to insulin, excess glucose collects in the bloodstream. This weakens arteries and may cause heart disease.⁴ You could be at [risk of developing](#) type 2 diabetes if you have unhealthy exercise and eating behaviors. If you don't exercise regularly and you [eat more food than your body needs](#), you could gain weight and increase your body fat. Fortunately, you can take steps now to avoid developing diabetes by maintaining healthy eating habits and increasing [physical activity](#) to at least 150 minutes each week.² See your doctor if you often feel tired, thirsty, and urinate frequently – these are signs of [high blood glucose levels](#), a factor that leads to a diagnosis of diabetes.

Week 4

Improve your heart health at any age by adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors including healthy eating, active living, and tobacco free living. To have a better idea of what your food habits are, and what factors might contribute to overeating, start logging what you eat and drink utilizing online tools, such as the NMCPHC "[Tracker to Identify Your Food Triggers](#)" food log, or use a mobile app. Then, develop a [healthy eating plan that fits your lifestyle](#). You can make a healthy eating lifestyle fun by learning how to [master flavorful cooking](#). Be physically active on a regular basis, even if you have a [wound, illness, or injury](#). If you use tobacco products, [quit!](#) Within one year of quitting, the risk of heart attack is reduced.⁵ Learn other ways to improve heart health by talking with your provider.

References

- ¹ 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.
- ² Cardiovascular Disease & Diabetes. American Heart Association. http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Diabetes/WhyDiabetesMatters/Cardiovascular-Disease-Diabetes_UCM_313865_Article.jsp. Updated August 2015.
- ³ High Blood Pressure Fact Sheet. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_bloodpressure.htm. Updated 16 June 2016.
- ⁴ Facts About Type 2. American Diabetes Association. <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/type-2/facts-about-type-2.html>. Updated 27 October 2015.
- ⁵ The Health Consequences of Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health. http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/sgr_2004/index.htm. Published 2004.