

Are you living a heart-healthy lifestyle?



Heart disease is the leading killer of Americans, resulting in nearly 700,000 deaths in 2020 alone. Over 18 million people in this country have coronary heart disease, the most common kind.

While heart disease can be an inherited problem, it can also be caused by environmental and behavioral factors. Developing healthy habits can help reduce your risk and severity of heart disease.

STOP SMOKING

Smoking is directly related to heart disease. It can:

- Raise triglycerides, a fat present in blood
- Lower the “good” HDL cholesterol
- Thicken, narrow and damage blood vessels
- Make blood more likely to clot, which can decrease blood flow
- Increase plaque buildup in blood vessels so the heart has to work harder
- Create secondhand smoke, which can cause the same problems for others who breathe it in

Stopping smoking is not easy, but there are many resources to help you quit. Ask your doctor, find information on our employee assistance program website, call 800-QUIT-NOW or visit the website smokfree.gov.

EAT HEART-HEALTHY FOODS AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

- Heart-healthy foods are high in nutrition, low in saturated fat and cholesterol; eat more of:
 - Lean meats like poultry and fish, or lean cuts of beef
 - Fruits and vegetables, which can be fresh, canned or frozen
 - Whole grains, nuts and beans
- Avoid foods and drinks that are high in sodium, added sugar or fat
- Limit foods that are high in fat, calories and cholesterol to special treats like a birthday dinner
- Drink alcohol in moderation, which means one drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men
- If you are overweight, ask your doctor to recommend a healthy goal weight and dietary changes to make

EXERCISE

- Each week, get 2-1/2 hours of moderate activity or 75 minutes of more intense activity, spread out over the week
 - Examples of moderate activity are brisk walking or gardening
 - Examples of intense activity are running, swimming laps or biking
- Some activity is better than none; work your way up to the recommended number of minutes per week

REDUCE STRESS

- If you are feeling stressed at work, talk to your supervisor about it
- Get enough sleep; most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep every day
- Disconnect from your phone and computer on personal time; 24/7 connectivity is stressful
- Take time for yourself to work on a hobby, do something fun with your family or friends
- Learn to say “no” to things you don’t want to do

ANNUAL WELLNESS EXAM

Get your annual checkup every year. High blood pressure and high cholesterol contribute to heart disease, and neither is something that you know is happening without those annual tests. Your doctor can also advise you on everything we just talked about: how to eat a heart-healthy diet, manage your stress and get more exercise.

By making a few changes in your lifestyle, you can protect your heart and help yourself live a longer, healthier and happier life.

