



February National Health Observances

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American Heart Month
www.americanheart.org

The ABCs of Preventing Heart Disease, Stroke and Heart Attack

Avoid Tobacco

Stop smoking. If you smoke, quit. If someone in your household smokes, encourage them to quit. We know it's tough. But it's tougher to recover from a heart attack or stroke or to live with chronic heart disease. Commit to quit. We're here to help if you need it.

Reduce blood cholesterol. Fat lodged in your arteries is a disaster waiting to happen. Sooner or later it could trigger a heart attack or stroke. You've got to reduce your intake of saturated and trans fat and get moving. If diet and exercise alone don't get those numbers down, then medication is the key. Take it just like the doctor orders. Here's the lowdown on where those numbers need to be:

Total Cholesterol – Less than 200 mg/dL

LDL (bad) Cholesterol – LDL cholesterol goals vary.

- Low risk for heart disease – Less than 160 mg/dL
- Intermediate risk for heart disease – Less than 130 mg/dL
- High risk for heart disease including those with heart disease or diabetes – Less than 100mg/dL

HDL (good) Cholesterol – 40 mg/dL or higher for men and 50 mg/dL or higher for women

Triglycerides – Less than 150 mg/dL

Lower high blood pressure. It's the single largest risk factor for stroke. Stroke is the No. 3 killer and one of the leading causes of disability in the United States. Stroke recovery is difficult at best and you could be disabled for life. Shake that salt habit, take any medication the doctor recommends *exactly as prescribed* and get moving. Those numbers need to get down and stay down. **Your goal is less than 120/80 mmHg.**

Be More Active

Be physically active every day. Research has shown that getting 30–60 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week can help lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol and keep your weight at a healthy level. But something IS better than nothing. If you're doing nothing now, start out slow. Studies show that people who have achieved even

a moderate level of fitness are much less likely to die early than those with a low fitness level.

Aim for a healthy weight. Obesity is an epidemic in America, not only for adults but also for children. Fad diets and supplements are not the answer. Good nutrition and physical activity are the only way to maintain a healthy weight. Obesity places you at risk for high cholesterol, high blood pressure and insulin resistance, a precursor of type 2 diabetes — the very factors that heighten your risk of cardiovascular disease. Your Body Mass Index (BMI) will tell you if your weight is healthy.

Choose Good Nutrition

Manage diabetes. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of diabetes-related death. People with diabetes are two to four times more likely to develop cardiovascular disease due to a variety of risk factors, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, obesity and lack of physical activity.

Reduce stress. Some scientists have noted a relationship between coronary heart disease risk and stress in a person's life that may affect the risk factors for heart disease and stroke. For example, people under stress may overeat, start smoking or smoke more than they otherwise would. Research has even shown that stress reaction in young adults predicts middle-age blood pressure risk.

Limit alcohol. Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure, cause heart failure and lead to stroke. It can contribute to high triglycerides, produce irregular heartbeats and affect cancer and other diseases. It contributes to obesity, alcoholism, suicide and accidents. The risk of heart disease in people who drink **moderate** amounts of alcohol (an average of one drink for women or two drinks for men per day) is lower than in nondrinkers. However, it's not recommended that nondrinkers start using alcohol or that drinkers increase the amount they drink.

February 16 is National Women's Heart Day

www.womansheartday.org