

HEART HEALTH: BE GOOD TO YOUR HEART

American Heart Month provides the perfect opportunity to learn more about keeping your heart in good health. There are things you can do to lower your risk of heart disease.

Maintain a healthy weight

Obesity is a major risk factor for heart disease. When you're overweight your heart works harder. Even being slightly overweight (10 to 20 pounds for a person of average height) increases the risk of heart disease.

Eat a heart-healthy diet

Your food choices greatly impact your chance of developing heart disease. Whole-grain foods contain fiber that can help you lower your blood cholesterol and feel full. Eating oily fish such as salmon, trout, and herring may help lower your risk of heart attack through the omega-3 fatty acids they contain. Fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber and help you control your weight and your blood pressure. Be sure to choose lean meats and poultry without skin, and cook them without added saturated and trans fat.

Get some exercise

A lack of physical activity is a major risk factor for heart disease. Not only does exercise make your heart stronger and work more efficiently, it helps burn calories. Walking, swimming and yoga are low-impact ways to get the exercise you need to stay healthy. Whether it's included in an exercise program or part of your daily routine, any physical activity adds up to a healthier heart.

Stop smoking

Cigarette smokers are two-to-three times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than nonsmokers. Smoking increases blood pressure, decreases "good" cholesterol, and increases the tendency for blood to clot. All of these can lead to a heart attack.



LEARN THE SIGNS OF A HEART ATTACK.

Heart attacks can come on suddenly and intensely, but did you know that a heart attack can also start slowly with just mild pain or discomfort? The early signs are often dismissed because people don't realize what is happening to them. **If you experience any of these symptoms, call 9-1-1.**

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort. Other signs may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or feeling lightheaded. Women may also experience symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and back or jaw pain.

Even if you're not sure, have it checked out. Fast treatment can make a lifesaving difference.