

The Road to Heart Health

Heart disease may be the leading cause of death for both men and women, but that doesn't mean you have to accept it as your fate. Although you lack the power to change some risk factors – such as family history, age and race – there are some key heart disease prevention steps you can take.



1. **Step into healthy eating:** Heart healthy eating is one of the best weapons you have to fight heart disease. Consistently eating a diet rich in vegetables, fruit, whole grains and low fat dairy products can help protect the heart. Other heart loving foods to include are legumes (dried peas, beans, and lentils), nuts, and fish especially fatty fish like salmon or mackerel. Limiting your intake of artery clogging saturated fat (found in meat, butter, cheese, coconut and palm oils) and trans fats (found in bricks of margarine, shortening and the many bakeshop/restaurant items made with this fat) are also very important in the quest for heart health.
2. **Are you watching your waistline?** The extra fat around our stomach area is a strong predictor of a number of chronic diseases one of which is heart disease. Watch what and the amount you eat, and keep active to help keep your waist slim and trim.
3. **Talk to your physician or other health care professional about your cholesterol levels as high blood cholesterol contributes to blocked and narrowed arteries.** They will guide you as to when and how often testing is required based on your risk factors.
4. **Quit smoking.** If you smoke, quit or reduce the amount. It is estimated that smokers lose five and a half minutes of their lives with every cigarette smoked.
5. **How are your blood sugar levels?** Did you know that if you have diabetes or even prediabetes you are at higher risk for developing heart disease? If you have diabetes it is extremely important to work with your healthcare provider to manage it and control other risk factors that you may have.
6. **What is your blood pressure level?** High blood pressure increases the risk of heart disease. Know your blood pressure and have it checked regularly. Reducing your salt intake can benefit blood pressure control. Ask a health care professional/dietitian about the DASH diet for blood pressure control.
7. **Be Active.** The benefits are plentiful as an active lifestyle can help control blood cholesterol, diabetes and obesity, as well as help lower blood pressure. So enjoy a walk on our great trails or get involved in whatever activity you enjoy from swimming to dancing.