

5 ways to help your heart

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of both men and women, but research shows that you can protect your heart. Here's how:

Manage your blood pressure

One of the strongest predictors of heart disease is your blood pressure. Normal blood pressure is 119/79 or below. This is read as "119 over 79." The top number is the "systolic" and the bottom number is the "diastolic." Talk to your doctor if your numbers are higher than normal.

Watch your cholesterol

High cholesterol does not have obvious symptoms to warn you of trouble. That's why it's so important to know your numbers and ask your doctor how to improve them. There are two numbers to know when it comes to cholesterol, LDL and HDL:

- LDL is low-density lipoprotein. This is the "bad" cholesterol. Your LDL number should be lower than 100. So when you see the L think, "Keep it low."
- HDL is high-density lipoprotein. This is the "good" cholesterol. Your HDL number should be above 60. So when you see the H think, "Keep it high."

Know your body mass index (BMI)

BMI measures body fat using a person's weight and height. You can use WebMD's BMI calculator to find your BMI.

- A BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is ideal.
- A BMI of 25 to 29.9 is overweight.
- A BMI of 30 to 39 indicates obesity.
- A BMI of 40 or more indicates morbid obesity. This increases a person's risk of death from any cause by 50% to 150%, according to The Cleveland Clinic.

Check your blood sugar

Your blood sugar number helps you assess your risk for type 2 diabetes.

- A normal fasting blood sugar is less than 100.
- A fasting blood sugar of 100 to 125 means you are prediabetic.
- A fasting blood sugar of 126 or greater means you have diabetes.

Exercise

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends aerobic exercise three to five days a week for 30 to 45 minutes.



Sources:
Michael Crouch, MD, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston.
WebMD Medical Reference from Healthwise. WebMD Medical Reference provided in collaboration with The Cleveland Clinic: "Body Mass Index (BMI)."

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