



> Heart health

February

Manage these conditions to stay heart healthy

Three common conditions may keep your heart from working its best. Awareness is the key to helping this strong muscle stay in top shape. Here are three things to watch for:

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that comes from your body or from food. We all have and need it, but aim to eat less “bad” cholesterol, which can lead to blood clots and increase your risk of a stroke or heart attack.

Diabetes causes blood sugar to rise too high. Your cells don’t get enough energy, and, over time, increased blood sugar may damage organs, leading to heart disease or stroke.

High blood pressure happens when the force of blood flowing through your body is elevated. Since many people don’t realize they have this “silent” condition, it’s important to know your numbers to lessen the risk of a stroke or heart attack.

Talk with your doctor about other ways to improve your heart health.

Source: American Heart Association

How your family history affects your heart

Has someone in your family had a stroke, a heart attack or heart disease? You share genes, behaviors, and environments with family members that can influence your own chance of developing these conditions.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for adults in the United States and stroke is No. 5, so it’s a good idea to know your family’s medical history and discuss it with your healthcare provider.

You can’t alter your genes, but you can make positive lifestyle changes to help prevent heart disease and stroke. Consider these wellness goals to start:

- > Eat nutritious food
- > Exercise regularly
- > Maintain a healthy weight
- > Limit alcohol use
- > Eliminate smoking

Sources: CDC and American Heart Association

Trivia time:

Which animal has the biggest heart?

Answer: The blue whale. Its heart weighs approximately 1,500 lbs!



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Seven ways to take care of your heart

Did you know that hearts beat about 4,800 times an hour? Adopt these healthy habits now to avoid heart problems in the future:

- > **Exercise for 30 minutes most days of the week.** Physical activity strengthens the heart.
- > **Eat a healthy diet.** Nutritious food adds fiber, vitamins and minerals that help your heart perform its best.
- > **Maintain healthy weight.** Losing excess pounds can cut the risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.
- > **Get good sleep.** Lack of rest raises the risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes and depression.
- > **Don't smoke.** Tobacco use forces your heart to work harder, raising your blood pressure and heart rate.
- > **Manage stress.** Reduce anxiety through physical activity, relaxation exercises or meditation.
- > **Get regular screenings, especially if heart conditions run in your family.** Tests can determine your numbers and let you know what other steps to take.

Source: Mayo Clinic

Trivia time:

How was the first pacemaker powered?

Answer: A wall socket

How heart disease affects women

Nine out of 10 American women have at least one risk factor for heart disease. Get heart smart by knowing your risk.

Heart disease:

- > Is the leading cause of death for women
- > Is responsible for about 1 in 4 female deaths
- > Can be silent – most women who die suddenly have no previous symptoms

Some women report chest pain or discomfort, but heart disease is often not diagnosed until a woman shows signs of a heart attack, an arrhythmia or stroke.

Sources: CDC and The Heart Foundation

Get up to speed on heart stats for men

Men have a greater risk of heart attack than women, and have heart attacks earlier in life.

- > Heart disease is responsible for around 1 in 4 male deaths in the U.S.
- > Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men in most racial/ethnic groups.
- > 70 to 89% of sudden cardiac events occur in men.
- > About half of all men who die suddenly of heart problems show no previous symptoms.

Remember to get regular screenings to help protect your heart.

Sources: CDC and American Heart Association