

Heart Health Tips

From The Cardiac Center of Creighton University Medical Center

1. Schedule time for exercise. Put it on your calendar like you would any other appointment. Make time to take care of your body if you want it to last.
2. Set short-term goals. Recording them in a health journal is a great way to stay motivated. Writing your goals down enables you to visualize what you are working toward and helps you realize when you achieve them.
3. Eat healthy. Healthy eating habits can help you reduce three of the major risk factors for heart attack and stroke – high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and excess body weight.
4. Help your children develop good physical activity habits at an early age by setting a good example yourself.
5. Teach your family the warning signs of heart attack. Every second counts! Call 911 if you or someone around you shows any of these symptoms:
 - Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
 - Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
 - Shortness of breath along with, or just prior to, chest discomfort.
 - Breaking out in a cold sweat, experiencing sudden nausea or feeling lightheaded.
6. Preserve the nutrients and colors in veggies. Cook them quickly by steaming or stir-frying.
7. Start making changes today! Begin an exercise program, take the stairs instead of the elevator or park further away from your destination.
8. Exercise at the same time everyday so it becomes a regular part of your lifestyle.
9. Cigarette smoking is the most preventable cause of premature death in the United States today. Do yourself a favor and quit!
10. Know your numbers! Learn your current blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index or waist circumference, and fasting blood sugar level to help assess your overall heart health.
11. Skip the temptation to call, email or Instant Message your coworkers. Get up and move around your office to get your blood pumping.

12. Portion control is the key when trying to lose weight. Use smaller plates to fool your brain into thinking you are eating larger portions.
13. Ban trans fats from your diet. Trans fats increase bad cholesterol and lower good cholesterol levels, so read food labels and try to choose only foods with 0 grams of trans fats.
14. The key to weight loss is simple: Consume fewer calories than you burn.
15. Eat more whole fruits and vegetables, and skip fruit juices, which are packed with sugar and are short on fiber.
16. Even a small amount of weight loss is beneficial to health. Every pound counts.
17. Add nuts to your diet by stirring chopped nuts into salads or eating nuts as a snack. The fat in nuts helps lower cholesterol and provides the fiber your body needs. Watch your portions though – keep in mind that one portion of nuts is about the size of your thumb.
18. Know your family history of heart disease. Family history is one risk factor you cannot alter, so find out if heart disease runs in your family and share this information with your doctor.
19. People with diabetes are at an increased risk of developing heart disease. It is important for diabetics to control blood sugar levels with diet and exercise or medication.
20. Learn to effectively manage stress. Increased stress levels can lead to poor heart health, so get plenty of sleep, practice deep breathing exercises and avoid overeating or smoking during times of increased stress.
21. Take your medications. If your doctor has prescribed medications for high blood pressure, high cholesterol or other health problems, it's important that you take these medicines as directed, even if you are feeling fine. Some health problems don't cause you to feel badly until it's unfortunately too late.
22. Incorporate at least 2 servings each day of a whole grain product. Choose products which list one of the following whole grains as the FIRST ingredient on the ingredient list: whole wheat, whole oats, whole rye, whole corn, brown rice, wild rice, bulgur, whole oats, oatmeal or graham.
23. Dried fruits make a great heart-healthy snack. They are easy to carry and store, but remember - 1/4 cup of dried fruits or 2 Tbsp. of raisins equals one fruit serving.

24. Celebrate with a checkup. Let each birthday remind you that it's time for your yearly checkup and a talk with your doctor about how you can reduce your risk for heart disease.
25. Cutting out just 500 calories a day can help you lose one pound per week, gradually bringing you closer to a heart healthy weight.
26. Try to incorporate at least 2 servings each week of fish rich in the heart healthy omega-fatty acids. These include salmon, herring, lake trout and albacore tuna.
27. If you drink cappuccinos or lattes, request that they be made with skim milk to reduce fat and calories by 50 - 100%!
28. When you quit tobacco use, the health benefits begin almost immediately. Just 20 minutes after your last cigarette or smokeless tobacco use, blood pressure and pulse rate drop to normal. Most physical withdraw symptoms disappear after only 1 – 2 weeks.