



Heart Disease Prevention

What is Heart Disease?

Heart disease refers to several different types of heart conditions. These conditions include coronary artery disease, heart rhythm problems, and blood vessel diseases. No matter the condition, people with heart disease are in danger of things like chest pain, heart attacks, heart failure, and strokes.

Risk Factors of Heart Disease

1. Poor diet and Physical Inactivity.

- a. Lack of physical activity and a diet high in saturated fats, sodium, and cholesterol will increase plaque buildup in your arteries.
- b. Plaque buildup slows blood flow to your organs including your heart and brain.
- c. An unhealthy diet can lead to diabetes which increases the risk of developing heart disease dramatically. This is because high blood sugar levels damage blood vessels and lead to blood clots.
- d. An unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity cause obesity which can lead to high blood pressure.

2. High blood pressure

- a. High blood pressure can cause the arteries to narrow and harden which will decrease blood flow through the body leading to heart attacks and strokes.

3. Unrelieved Stress

- a. Stress increases the likelihood of eating poorly and being sedentary.
- b. Stress may also increase blood pressure.

4. Smoking, Alcohol, and Caffeine

- a. Smoking constricts your blood vessels and carbon monoxide damages them. Both of these reduce blood flow through the body.
- b. Heart attacks are more common in smokers.
- c. Alcohol and caffeine increase blood pressure.

5. Age and family history

- a. Older age and family history increases the risk of heart disease.
- b. We cannot control these factors, but it is good to know that they are risk factors, so you know you must take extra care to prevent heart disease.

Prevent Heart Disease

1. Maintain a Healthy Weight

- a. Eat healthy and stay active to maintain a healthy weight.
- b. Doctors can determine if you are overweight, or you can use an online BMI calculator which is faster and free.

2. Exercise Regularly

- a. Exercise helps you maintain a healthy weight.
- b. It helps you lower blood pressure and cholesterol, both of which are risk factors for heart disease.
- c. The Surgeon General recommends 2.5 hours of exercise a week to take care of your heart.
- d. Try to stay active as much as possible. Just moving is good for you.



3. Eat Well

a. Eat fruits and vegetables

- I. Eating fruits and vegetables lowers the risk of having a heart attack by 35%.
- II. It lowers the risk of coronary artery disease by 25%.
- III. Some fruits and vegetables help reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels including oranges, pomegranates, garlic, and beans.
- IV. Fruits and vegetables are have no cholesterol and are high in fiber.

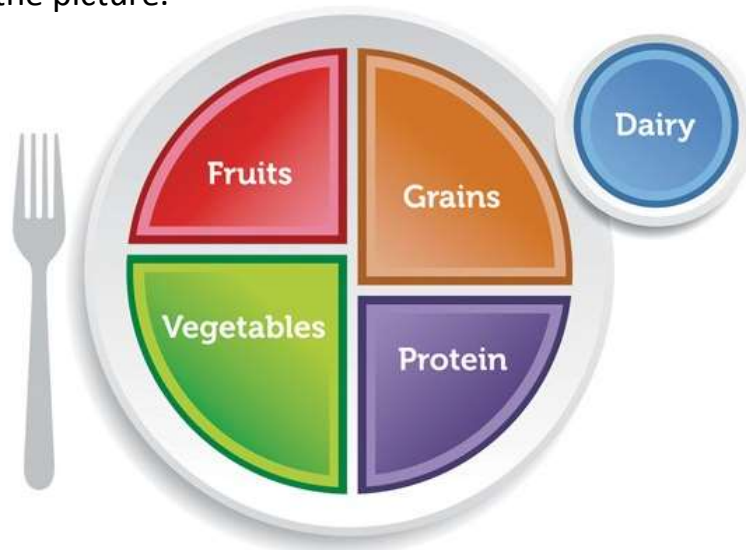
b. Limit Saturated Fat, Cholesterol, and Sodium

- I. The American Heart Association recommends reducing saturated fat to 6% of total daily calories. For a 2000 calorie diet, that's about 13 grams of saturated fat a day.
- II. Studies have shown that if you decrease the amount of sodium you eat by 1 gram a day, it could decrease the number of deaths from coronary artery disease by 16%.
- III. Avoid foods with high cholesterol levels like red meats, processed meats, and fatty foods like pastries.
- IV. Diets limited in these control weight and keep the heart and vessels healthy.



c. Portion Size

- I. Eating too big of portions can lead to obesity.
- II. Follow My Plate guidelines (the picture below) for healthy portion sizes. Your food should be split up on your plate like it is in the picture.



d. Eat dark chocolate if you are craving something sweet

- I. Small amounts of dark chocolate has been shown to lower blood pressure
- II. Dark chocolate is full of flavonoids that widen blood vessels allowing for more blood flow throughout the body.
- III. The chocolate must be 50% to 70% cocoa. The front of the package will tell you how much cocoa is in it.

4. Don't Smoke



- a. Benefits of quitting smoking begins immediately.
- b. Deaths from heart disease are reduced by one-third in people who quit smoking compared with people who continue smoking.
- c. Your risk of developing heart disease is cut in half 1 year after quitting.
- d. If you have not developed heart disease within 15 years of quitting, your risk is nearly the same as the risk in someone who has never smoked.

5. Limit alcohol

- a. Too much alcohol causes high blood pressure.
- b. Men should have no more than two drinks a day.
- c. Women should have no more than one drink a day.

6. Strive for Stress Relief

- a. Exercising, spending time with family, laughing, volunteering, getting a massage, or attending religious services are some ways you can relieve stress.
- b. If you are feeling stressed, seek relief as soon as possible to avoid the long term effects of stress on the heart.

