

Exercise Regularly

+ Exercise at least 3 times a week for cardiovascular fitness and daily for weight control. Always check with your health care professional before starting any exercise program.

+ Maximize health benefits by making exercise part of your daily routine. Regular exercise helps to

- Condition the heart
- Strengthen bones
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce stress
- Stabilize blood sugar
- Raise HDL
- Control weight
- Get you feeling great!*

+ Always do warm-up and cool-down exercises to help prevent muscle injury.

+ Aim for at least 30 minutes a day, or, if time is short, exercise for two 15-minute periods. Begin gradually. Start out at 10-15 minutes a day, increasing your routine over several weeks to 30 minutes.



* While exercise can help lift mood, it is not a treatment for clinical depression. Seek professional help if you feel depressed.

Eat Sensibly

+ Eat a wide variety of foods in moderation and follow the Food Guide Pyramid for portion size.

- Eat at least 5 servings a day of fruits and vegetables
- Increase dietary fiber to 25 - 30 grams a day.

+ Use the Nutrition Facts Label as an aid for healthful food choices.

- Limit total fat*
- Limit saturated fat to 1/3 of total fat.

+ Limit hydrogenated fat (also called "trans-fat") by reading the ingredients section on food labels. Choose soft or liquid margarines and limit snack foods.

+ Replace unhealthy fats with healthy mono-unsaturates like olive, canola and peanut oil.

+ Eat at least one fish meal a week. Cold water fish contains healthy omega-3 oils.

+ Drink 6 glasses of water a day to prevent dehydration.

+ Maintain a healthy weight. Don't crash diet.

* For general good health, the American Heart Association recommends limiting total fat to less than 30% of total calories, however, your fat needs may be higher or lower than this amount. Ask your healthcare professional what your total fat and calorie intake should be.

Manage Stress

+ Stress is a stress is a normal part of life. How you cope with stress may have an effect on your heart.

+ Schedule "me" time to do the things that give you pleasure.

+ Devote an hour a day to relaxing. Take a walk. Do yoga stretches. Try needlepoint, knitting...any activity that promotes relaxation.

+ Practice meditation to help control reactions to stress.

+ Get a good night's sleep.

+ Allow others to help with daily chores.



Note: About 70% of American women work outside the home. Those who have multiple roles and who are caregivers to young children are exposed to the highest levels of stress. A high demand/low control job can lead to sustained high levels of stress hormone. To learn more about mindfulness and managing stress, ask for WHF's article "Living with Mindfulness".

Control High Blood Pressure

+ Take medication exactly as prescribed. High blood pressure often has no symptoms – that's why it's called *The Silent Killer*. A blood pressure reading of 135/85 or above is considered high.

+ Monitor high blood pressure regularly. Ask your doctor about blood pressure self-monitoring.



+ Be aware of Risk Factors for High Blood Pressure:

- **Heredity:** high blood pressure tends to run in families
- **Race:** twice as frequent in African Americans than Whites
- **Obesity:** 2-6 times more likely to develop if obese
- **Age:** risk goes up as you get older
- **Salt Intake** (if salt sensitive)
- **Excess Alcohol Intake**
- **Lack of Exercise**
- **Stress**

+ Ask your health care professional about the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) or call 1-800-575-WELL. Visit the DASH web site at <http://dash.bwh.harvard.edu>

Avoid Potential Problems

+ Don't smoke. Avoid second-hand smoke. Smoking *greatly* increases risk of heart attack, stroke and other diseases.

+ If diabetic, keep blood sugars under good control and do a "foot check" daily.

+ Avoid any drugs that contribute to heart rhythm disturbances. See your health care professional if you experience palpitations or have an irregular heartbeat.

Avoid drug interactions by letting all of your doctors know about every medicine you are taking – even over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbal supplements and birth control pills.*



+ Red wine and other alcoholic beverages may help reduce the risk of heart disease. Women should limit alcohol intake to one drink per day. Alcohol is an addictive drug and excess consumption is a risk factor for heart disease, cancer, birth defects and alcohol-related illnesses. Excess alcohol intake contributes to domestic violence and auto-related deaths. An alternative beverage like purple grape juice may offer the same health benefits for arteries without the concerns of alcohol.

* For Internet information about drug interactions, visit [web site http://www.rxlist.com](http://www.rxlist.com)

Have Healthy Relationships

+ Intimacy, trust and feeling supported are ingredients of a healthy relationship. Share your feelings with a trusted loved one. Learn to communicate effectively to get what you need. Seek counseling or support groups if you have difficulty relating to others.

+ When reporting health concerns, be Clear, Objective & Persistent.



+ Remain active in your role as a caregiver. Share yourself. Volunteer.

HEALTHY HEARTS PROGRAM
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