

TAKING CONTROL

Now that you know the risks for heart disease, what can you do to protect yourself? The good news: Plenty. Research shows that women can lower their heart disease risk enormously -by 82 percent- simply by leading a healthy lifestyle. This section will offer dozens of down-to-earth ideas for making heart-healthy practices part of your daily life.

If you already have heart disease, this section also will tell you about the kinds of tests, treatments and medications that can help you stay healthier. You will also find out about the warning signs of a heart attack and how to get fast, life-saving help.

For all women, adopting a healthy lifestyle is extremely important. Remember, heart disease is a woman's greatest health threat. Making healthy changes in your daily habits can add years to your life -vital, active years. You will gain more energy and stamina to enjoy the people and activities you love.

Sometimes, women are so good at taking care of others that they don't take the time to keep themselves healthy and strong. Make time to take care of yourself. And once you get started, keep it up. Ask your family and friends to support you in maintaining your new, heart-healthy lifestyle. You're worth it!

Research shows that women can lower their heart disease risk enormously-by 82 percent- simply by leading a healthy lifestyle

•

A FAMILY PLAN FOR HEART *health*

As you make healthy changes in your own daily habits, why not get the whole family involved? By teaching your children or grandchildren the importance of eating well and getting regular physical activity, you will help them develop good habits for a lifetime. Here are some ways to get started:

Set a good example. Adults have a big influence on children's and teen's behavior—even though kids may not want to admit it! If you follow a healthy lifestyle, your children and grandchildren will be more likely to do the same. Let them see you eating nutritious snacks and enjoying outdoor activities. Invite them to join you.

Raise “kitchen kids.” Show young children how to clean fruits and veggies and combine them into salads. When they are old enough, teach them to use the cooktop, oven, microwave, and toaster safely. Show teens how to make simple, healthy dishes, such as pasta with vegetables and broiled chicken or fish. Children who have basic cooking skills appreciate food more and are more likely to try new dishes.

Get them moving. Encourage your kids or grandkids to get some exercise throughout the day and especially on weekends. Go on outings with them that involve activities such as hiking, swimming, or bicycling. Walk, bike, or jog with them to places close by. Use your backyard or local park for basketball, baseball, football, badminton, or volleyball.

An Action Plan for Heart Health

Here's the heart truth: If you eat a nutritious diet, get regular physical activity, maintain a healthy weight and stop smoking, you will improve your heart health. No matter what heart disease risk factors you have—or how many—you will greatly benefit from taking action in these four areas. If you already have heart disease, you can lessen its severity by following this plan. True, you may need to take other steps to prevent or control heart disease. For example, if you have diabetes, you also will need to keep your blood sugar levels under control. But eating a good diet, controlling your weight, and getting more physical activity will help you keep your blood sugar at healthy levels. These steps will also help reduce your chances of developing high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol. Whatever your current health conditions or habits, this action plan can make an enormously positive difference in your heart health. To find out how to get started, read on.

Eat for Health

The health of your heart has a lot to do with the foods you eat. One good eating plan is the “Dietary Guidelines for Americans,” which also includes advice for overall health and food safety:

- ♥ Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.
- ♥ Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
- ♥ Choose a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and moderate in total fat.
- ♥ Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.
- ♥ Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- ♥ If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.
- ♥ Aim for a healthy weight.
- ♥ Be physically active each day.
- ♥ Keep food safe to eat.
- ♥ Let the Pyramid guide your food choices.