

Managing Your Heart Disease

We recommend that you follow the “Life’s Simple 7” recommendations from the American Heart Association. These seven measures have one unique thing in common; any person can make these changes. These steps are not expensive to take and even small improvements to your health can make a big difference. Start with just one or two of the steps. The goal of these Simple 7 steps is to help you to live a long, productive, and healthy life.

1. **Get Active** – Find time everyday to exercise for at least 30 minutes. Regular exercise will help to lower your blood pressure, increase your good cholesterol, control blood sugar, reduce feelings of stress, control your weight, and make you feel good about yourself. Physical activity is anything that makes you move your body and burns calories.
2. **Control Cholesterol**- Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like substance found in the bloodstream. Too much cholesterol in the blood is a major risk for heart disease. Cholesterol comes from your body and from food. It is important to know your cholesterol numbers. A cholesterol level of 200 mg/dl or higher puts you at high-risk for heart disease. To keep your cholesterol in control, check your levels every year, eat foods low in cholesterol and saturated fat, maintain a healthy weight, stay physically active, and take medications as directed by your doctor.
3. **Eat Better**- A healthy diet and lifestyle are your best weapons against cardiovascular disease. You need to eat nutrient-rich foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole-grain products, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, and fish. Aim to eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol and less than 1500 milligrams of sodium each day.
4. **Manage Blood Pressure**- High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, can be one of the most significant risk factors for heart disease and is sometimes called the “silent killer” because it has no symptoms. By keeping your blood pressure in the healthy range, you are: reducing your risk of the walls of your arteries becoming overstretched and injured, reducing your risk of your heart having to pump harder to compensate for blockages caused by injuries to your arteries, and protecting your body so that your tissue receives regular supplies of blood that is rich in the oxygen it needs.
5. **Lose Weight**- Obesity is a major, independent risk factor for heart disease. Maintaining a healthy body weight reduces your risk of health problems such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, and diabetes. It is important that you balance your caloric intake with the energy calories you’re burning off with physical activity.
6. **Reduce Blood Sugar**- Diabetes is one of the six major controllable risk factors for heart disease. Adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have a heart attack or stroke. Controlling your blood sugar can slow progression of long-term complications. Work closely with your doctor to manage your diabetes.
7. **Stop Smoking**- Smoking is the most important preventable cause of death in the U.S. Smokers have a higher risk of developing atherosclerosis (fatty substance build-up in your arteries) which can lead to heart disease and heart attack.