
Tips for Cardiovascular Health

Your diet and lifestyle can affect your risk of high blood pressure and many heart diseases, such as heart failure, peripheral and coronary artery disease.

Limit sodium intake. A diet high in sodium (salt) can cause your body to retain water. It forces your heart to work harder to pump the extra water.

Sources of high sodium foods:

- Fast Food/ Restaurants
- Canned Foods
- Boxed Foods
- TV Dinners
- Snack Cakes/ Packaged desserts

Tips to Limit Sodium:

- Fast food and sit-down restaurants use a lot of salt to season their foods. Try to limit meals eaten out. Ask restaurants to prepare food without salt.
- Use salt-free flavorings such as garlic powder, herb seasoning blends, and fresh herbs or spices.
- Choose fresh or frozen meats instead of cured or processed.
- Choose fresh or frozen vegetables instead of canned. Rinse and drain canned foods to reduce the salt content.
- Avoid canned soups.
- If your diet consists of mostly whole foods, and you limit processed foods, sodium is typically not an issue.
- Check the label and choose lower sodium options. Aim for foods with less than 200 mg of sodium per sodium.

Fluid: Ask your provider if you should weigh yourself and if you should keep a record of your daily fluid intake. Limiting fluid intake is a temporary restriction.

Medicines: Take your pills at the same time every day and do not skip a dose.

Smoking: Smoking narrows and hardens your blood vessel. It reduces the amount of oxygen in your blood. Smoking damages your heart and lung and should be avoided.

Eat fresh or frozen vegetables: Vegetables are a good source of nutrients and anti-inflammatory compounds. Inflammation contributes to heart and blood vessel damage. As a bonus, foods such as beets, celery, and leafy greens can provide natural nitrates to help open blood vessels and lower blood pressure.

Physical activity improves your health: Regular activity can help lower blood pressure, suppress the clogging of the arteries (atherosclerosis), support blood vessel growth (atherogenesis), increase insulin sensitivity, and improve blood lipids. It can also help to make your heart and lungs work better. Always start slowly and talk to your provider about how much activity is right for you. Avoid over-exertion, or any activity that causes dizziness, moderate shortness of breath, or chest pain.

Alcohol: Alcohol can worsen heart conditions, contribute to cardiomyopathy, and change nutrient absorption. Alcohol provides excess calories that can lead to weight gain. Avoid alcohol. It is not advised to start drinking red wine for heart health.

Brush & Floss Daily: Poor oral hygiene has been linked to an increased risk of various diseases, including cardiovascular disease.

Sleep: Sleep is needed for a healthy heart. People who do not sleep enough are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease and coronary heart disease—regardless of age, weight, smoking and exercise habits. Getting enough good quality sleep is important if you want to lower your risk.

Stress: Excessive stress and/or anxiety can contribute to hypertension and additional conditions. Some stress is unavoidable in our daily lives; try to find ways to manage stress in a healthy way. Ask your provider if you would like help with stress management.