



5 Ways to Prevent Heart Disease

Learn how to prevent heart disease by following these five, simple tips. You'll find that not only will you reduce your risk of a heart attack, but also the risk for suffering a stroke or diabetes.

Heart disease is a disorder of the blood vessels that lead to your heart, and once you contract it, you will have it for the rest of your life. That is why it is so important to take steps to stop it before it starts.

It has long been believed that men are at higher risk of suffering from – and dying of – heart disease than women, but that is not true. **Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States.** This means that one in four people that you know will pass away because of heart disease or a related illness.

But the future doesn't have to be as grim as the past. With a few simple changes to your lifestyle, you can fight this silent killer -- and win. The following tips will help you get started.



1

Move Your Body. Your heart is a muscle, and like every muscle in your body, needs to be exercised regularly. This means different things for different people, but the bottom line is that it is important to get your heart rate up for at least 20 minutes, no fewer than three times a week. Walking, strength training, swimming, biking are all good options. You may also want to look into joining a gym or senior center near you that offers exercise programs designed specifically for your age group and fitness level. Always check with your doctor first, as they will be able to help you figure out what will work best for you and any other health issues that you may have.



2

Say Yes to "Good" Fat. Not all fat is bad for your heart. As a matter of fact, certain fats help to protect it and are actually good at fighting heart disease. Try eating more salmon, blueberries, oatmeal, brown rice, and tomatoes in your diet. These foods, among others, have been found to be high in Omega-3 fatty acids, fiber or antioxidants. Green tea and red wine have also been found to help in the fight against heart disease. To learn more about heart-healthy foods, log on to www.covenanthc.org.



3

Quit Smoking. What more is there to say? Smoking is one of the number one causes of heart disease and cancer among both men and women. Luckily, there are more ways to break the habit now than ever before. Talk to your doctor about how you can quit, today.



4

Get Rid of the Belly. Your stomach says a lot about your heart. Studies have found that those with more fat around their middles run a higher risk of developing heart disease. Doctors don't really know why this is, but current thought is that the fat that tends to form around your belly releases more fatty acids that causes inflammation and plaque -- the stuff that can clog your arteries.



5

Control Blood-Pressure and Cholesterol Levels. High blood pressure and cholesterol is one of the leading indicators of heart disease. Although both of these conditions can be hereditary, it is important to monitor these levels regardless of your family history. The higher your blood pressure and cholesterol, the harder your heart has to work to keep blood moving through your body. Eating a heart-healthy diet and exercise is the first line of defense in controlling blood pressure and cholesterol, although medication may be needed, too. Your doctor will work with you to create a plan that works best for you.



Know the Warning Signs

If you or someone you care for suffers from heart disease, it is important that you know and recognize the signs of a heart attack. Remember, the sooner you get help, the more heart muscle you save. If you experience any of the following symptoms, call 911 immediately!

- Chest pain, pressure, discomfort that is constant or that comes in waves.
- Shortness of breath.
- Pain in your jaw, back, or in one or both arms.
- Stomach upset.
- Breaking out in a cold sweat.



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