



How Can I Make My Lifestyle Healthier?

It's never too late to make better health choices. All you need is a goal, a plan and the desire to live better.

Here are some simple steps to take:

- Don't smoke cigarettes or use other tobacco products.
- Have your blood pressure checked regularly. Keep your blood pressure below 120/80 mm Hg
- Eat a healthy diet consistent with recommendations from the American Heart Association.
- Get at least 150 minutes of moderate- intensity physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity (or a combination) each week.
- Maintain a healthy weight (body mass index less than 25 kg/m²).
- Keep your total cholesterol at less than 200 mg/dL.
- Keep your fasting blood glucose at less than 100 mg/dL.

How do I stop smoking?

- Ask your family and friends to support you.
- Ask your healthcare provider for information, programs and medications that may help.
- Go where smoking isn't allowed, and avoid being around people who smoke.
- Keep busy doing things that make it hard to smoke.

How do I manage my blood pressure?

- If your doctor has put you on medication, take it exactly as prescribed.
- If you are overweight, lose weight.
- Be more physically active.
- Reduce your salt (sodium) intake.
- Eat more fruits, vegetables and non-fat dairy products.



How do I change my eating habits?

- Eat at least 4.5 cups of fruits and vegetables per day.
- Eat at least 2 (3.5-oz) servings of fish per week.
- Eat at least 3 1-oz servings of fiber-rich whole grains per day.
- Keep sodium to less than 1,500 mg per day.
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages to no more than 450 calories (36 oz) per week.
- Limit processed meats and choose fat-free or low-fat dairy products.

What about physical activity?

- Start slowly and build up to a total of 30 to 60 minutes on most or all days of the week.
- Look for ways to be more active. Take 10–15-minute walking breaks during the day or after meals.
- Check with your doctor before you start if you've been inactive a long time or have a chronic condition.

How can I reach and maintain a healthy weight?

- To lose weight, you must take in fewer calories than you use.

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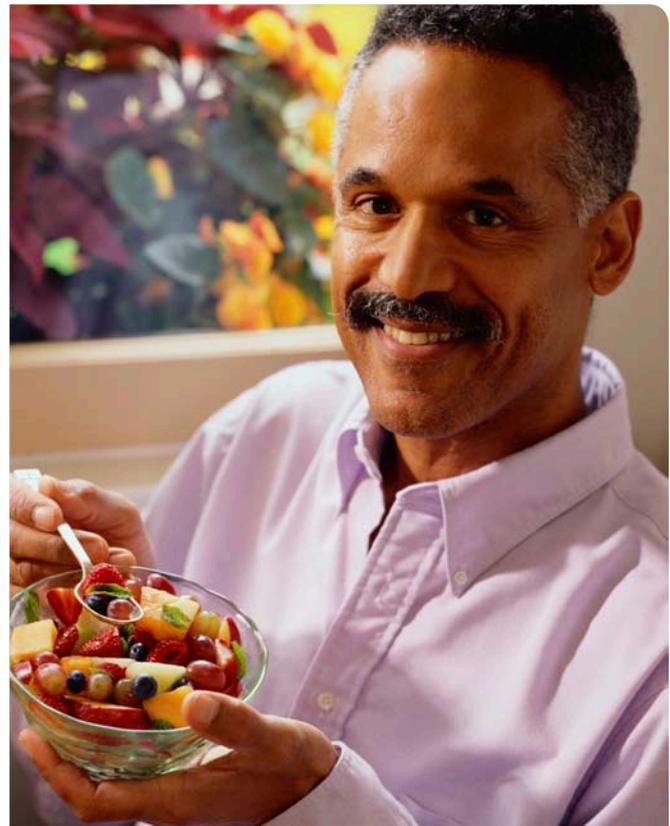
- Follow an overall healthy diet pattern.
- Get and stay physically active.

How do I manage my cholesterol?

- Get your blood cholesterol level checked at least once every five years. Start at age 20.
- If your total blood cholesterol level is 240 mg/dL or higher, it's too high. You'll need it checked more often.
- Limit your saturated fat intake to less than 7 percent of total calories.
- Keep your trans fat intake to less than 1 percent of total calories.
- If your doctor has put you on medication, take it exactly as prescribed.

What can I do to reduce my blood sugar?

- Reduce consumption of simple sugars that are found in soda, candy and sugary desserts.
- Get regular physical activity! Take medications or insulin if it is prescribed for you.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.** If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
- 2 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease.
- 3** For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at StrokeAssociation.org.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

What's the most important change I can make?

What if I go back to bad habits?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/answersbyheart to learn more.

Knowledge is power, so Learn and Live!

