

February is Heart Month



The link between a healthy diet and a healthy heart

Heart disease is a leading cause of death across the globe. According to the World Health Organization, ischaemic heart disease is responsible for 16 percent of the world's total deaths. The WHO also points out that, between 2000 and 2019, deaths due to ischaemic heart disease rose by more than two million.

Though not all deaths due to heart disease are preventable, many are, and researchers have discovered various ways individuals can reduce their risk for heart disease. One way individuals can protect their heart health is to eat a healthy diet. The link between diet and heart health is significant. Recognition of that link can help people concerned about heart disease develop a dietary plan that reduces their risk for this all-too-common killer.



A healthy diet, cholesterol and heart health

A healthy diet, weight and heart health

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that a healthy diet is balanced and includes a variety of nutritious foods. In fact, one easy way to determine if a plate is healthy is to see how colorful it is. The CDC notes that "eating the rainbow" means a plate is filled with an array of colors, which typically means an individual is eating healthy foods. Such a plate may include dark, leafy greens; bright red tomatoes; colorful fruits like oranges; and even fresh herbs. Such foods tend to be loaded with vitamins, fibers and minerals and low in added sugars, sodium, saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol. That makes it easier for individuals to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, which in turn reduces their risk for heart disease. A recent study from researchers at Johns Hopkins found that obesity itself can lead to heart failure, even in the absence of markers for heart disease like high blood pressure, diabetes and elevated cholesterol that have long been used to determine an individual's risk for heart disease. So by using a nutritious diet to maintain or achieve a healthy weight, individuals are thus lowering their risk for heart disease, even if they do not presently have any of the established markers indicating that risk has been elevated.

Of course, many people already have learned that they are at an elevated risk for heart disease due to certain lifestyle choices, including poor diet. A poor diet can cause a host of health problems, including elevating cholesterol levels. According to the Heart & Vascular Center at Valley View Hospital in western Colorado, a diet high in saturated fat can lead to heart disease because it can increase cholesterol levels. The Mayo Clinic notes that, when a person has high cholesterol, fatty deposits can develop in the blood vessels. Those deposits eventually grow, making it difficult for sufficient blood to flow through the arteries. The deposits also can break and form clots that can cause heart attack or stroke. Though Harvard Health notes that some people are genetically predisposed to high blood cholesterol, a diet that limits intake of saturated fat can help most people maintain healthy cholesterol levels, thus reducing their risk for heart disease. Foods high in saturated fat include pork, beef, lamb, cream, butter, and cheese.

Heart disease claims the lives of millions of people across the globe every year. Diet is an undeniable ally in the fight against heart disease, and individuals who commit to eating right can greatly reduce their risk for heart disease.

Numbers to Know

Having your blood pressure tested is the only way to know if you have hypertension. While a diagnosis of high blood pressure must be confirmed with a medical professional, you can follow these guidelines from the American Heart Association to understand your blood pressure test results:

Blood pressure is recorded as two numbers.

1. Systolic is the first number. It indicates how much pressure your blood is exerting against your artery walls when the heart beats.

2. Diastolic is the second number. It indicates how much pressure your blood is exerting against your artery walls while the heart is resting between beats.

While more consideration is typically given to systolic blood pressure as a risk factor for cardiovascular disease in people over age 50, an elevated diastolic blood pressure reading may also be used to make a diagnosis.

Normal Blood Pressure

Less than 120/80 mm Hg
Recommendation: Continue with heart-healthy lifestyle habits.

Elevated Blood Pressure

Consistent range from 120-129 systolic and less than 80 mm Hg diastolic
Recommendation: Begin making

lifestyle changes to reduce your risk of developing high blood pressure.

Hypertension Stage 1

Consistent range from 130-139 systolic or 80-89 mm Hg diastolic
Recommendation: Talk to your doctor about lifestyle changes, and find out if blood pressure medication should be prescribed.

Hypertension Stage 2

Consistently at 140 or higher systolic or 90 or higher mm Hg diastolic
Recommendation: Talk to your doctor to determine necessary lifestyle changes and medication.

Hypertensive Crisis

Above 180 systolic and/or 120 mm Hg diastolic

Recommendation: If you are also experiencing chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, change in vision, numbness/weakness or difficulty speaking, call 911 immediately. Otherwise, wait five minutes, then test your blood pressure again. If numbers persist, consult your doctor without delay.

Source: American Heart Association

Get your blood pressure tested today for free!

KNOW THE SIGNS!

SAVE A LIFE



SIGNS OF A HEART ATTACK



1 Pressure or squeezing in the center of the chest



2 Shortness of breath



3 Shooting pain through shoulders, arms, neck or jaw



4 Heartburn, nausea or indigestion-like pain



5 Dizziness, fainting or sudden abnormal sweating



6 Extreme fatigue or exhaustion

* Women may experience signs that may not be as easy to recognize, such as fatigue or feeling flu-like symptoms.



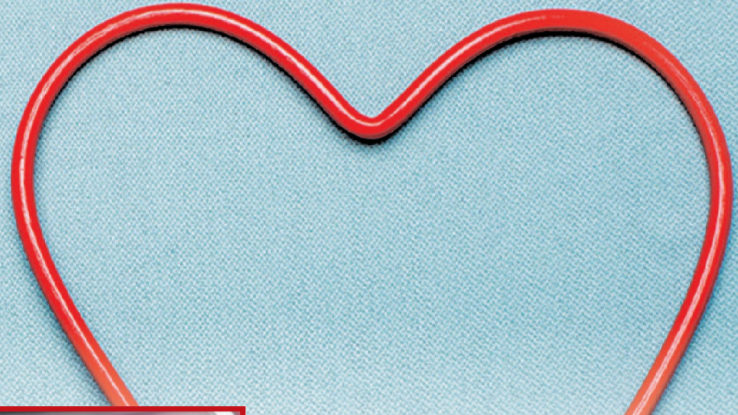
! Always call 911 when you feel any combination of these symptoms. Do not wait or try to drive yourself to the hospital.

Cardiovascular Institute

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Taking Your Health to Heart

Obesity, physical inactivity and low fruit and vegetable consumption can all significantly increase an individual's risk of developing hypertension. Here are a few lifestyle habits the CDC recommends to help minimize risk:

Diet
Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and other natural foods that support a healthy weight. Consuming foods low in salt and high in potassium can also help lower blood pressure.

Exercise
The Surgeon General recommends 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise weekly, such as brisk walking or cycling. Children and adolescents should get a full hour of physical activity daily.

Smoke & Alcohol
Avoid cigarette smoking and secondhand smoke, and limit alcohol consumption to no more than two drinks per day for men or one drink per day for women.

While the link between stress and high blood pressure is still being studied, it is known to contribute to other risk factors for hypertension. Consider practices like talk therapy, meditation, yoga, deep breathing, time management assessment or simply spending more time in nature or with loved ones to start managing your stress levels and stress response.



What's a good heart rate for your age?

A resting heart rate can be a good indicator of health. According to the Mayo Clinic, generally speaking, a lower heart rate at rest implies more efficient heart function and better cardiovascular fitness. Athletes tend to have lower normal resting heart rates than non-athletes. Conversely, an unusually high resting heart rate may signify an increased risk of heart disease or another medical condition, advises Harvard Health.

While the official stance on resting heart rate for adults indicates it should range from 60 to 100 beats per minute (bpm), most healthy adults fall between 55 and 85 bpm. However, certain people may fall outside of this range and still be healthy. Penn Medicine says resting heart rate generally should not be too fast or too slow, and should not fluctuate all that often.

What qualifies as a healthy resting heart rate changes as one ages. In fact, heart rates for children are much different from adults.

- Newborn babies: 100 to 205 bpm
- Infants under 1 year: 100 to 180 bpm
- 1 to 2 years: 98 to 140 bpm
- 3 to 5 years: 80 to 120 bpm
- 6 to 7 years: 75 to 118 bpm
- Older children and teens: 60 to 100 bpm
- Adults: 60 to 100 bpm

Men and women differ slightly in resting heart rate. The National Institutes of Health says the average adult male heart rate is between 70 and 72 bpm, while the average for adult women is between 78 and 82 bpm. This is due in large part to the fact that men have larger hearts than women. This occurs even after accounting for age and physical fitness.

There are ways to lower resting heart rate. Exercise, quitting smoking and relaxing to reduce stress and anxiety can promote a low resting heart rate

High Blood Pressure "The Silent Killer"

Hypertension, another name for high blood pressure, is the leading modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Approximately 29 percent of adults in the United States have high blood pressure, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Statistics Canada reports that nearly 24 percent of Canadian men and 23 percent of women have hypertension. Because high blood pressure often shows no signs or symptoms, this "silent killer" can be difficult to detect and is listed by the World Health Organization as the leading risk factor for death worldwide.



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WVU Heart & Vascular Institute

LOVE YOUR HEART.

Know your numbers.

From young hearts to the young at heart, know your numbers – it could save your life.

February is American Heart Month. While your health should be a priority all year round, this month is a reminder to show some love to your heart. Knowing your blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, and body mass index can help indicate early signs or ongoing heart conditions.

Take action now, and schedule an appointment with a cardiologist at the WVU Heart and Vascular Institute by visiting MyWVUHeart.com.