

Healthy Heart Healthy Life

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Community Hospital

February is National Heart Month

What is Heart Healthy Living?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. Most middle-aged and young adults have one or more risk factors for heart disease, and having multiple risk factors increases your risk of heart disease. *The good news is that there's a lot we can do to prevent it.*

Connecting with Others is Good for Your Heart

Research shows that people with close relationships at home, work, or in their community tend to be healthier and live longer. One reason, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), is that we're more successful at meeting our health goals when we work on them with others.

Feeling connected with others and having positive, close relationships benefit our overall health, including our blood pressure and weight. Having people in our lives who motivate and care for us helps, as do feelings of closeness and companionship.



RCH Wants to Partner with **You**

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RCH wants to be your partner in creating a heart-healthy community. We've created this Healthy Heart, Healthy Life guide from information provided by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Along with this guide are some self-tracking guides and activities to kick-start your journey to a stronger heart to be the healthiest you.

Here are some facts, how-to tips, and resources to inspire you to join with others, even if you can't be physically together, to improve your heart health. Follow these lifestyle tips to protect your heart.

Lifestyle Tips:

- **Be more physically active.**
- **Maintain a healthy weight.**
- **Eat a nutritious diet.**
- **Quit smoking.**
- **Manage stress.**
- **Get 7-9 hours of quality sleep.**
- **Track your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar numbers.**

You don't have to make big changes all at once. Small steps will get you where you want to go.

Move More

Invite family, friends, colleagues, or members of your community to join you in your efforts to be more physically active:

- Ask a colleague to walk "with you" regularly, put the date on both your calendars, and text or call to make sure you both get out for a walk.
- Get a friend or family member to sign up for the same online exercise class, such as a dance class. Make it a regular date!
- Grab your kids, put on music, and do jumping jacks, skip rope, or dance in your living room or yard.

How much is enough? Aim for at least 2½ hours of physical activity each week — that's just 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. In addition, do muscle-strengthening exercises 2 days a week. Can't carve out a lot of time in your day? Try doing 10 minutes of physical activity at least three times a day. **NHLBI's Move More fact sheet has ideas to get and keep you moving.**



How much is enough?

As little as 60 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity such as walking briskly helps your heart. For major health benefits, aim for at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) a week. Or go for 75 minutes a week of more vigorous activity such as playing basketball, running, or jumping rope, which gives the same benefits. The bottom line: More activity means a bigger boost to your health.

It's up to you how you reach your own personal targets. For example, 30 minutes of physical activity, five times a week, is one option if you're aiming for 150 minutes a week.

Can't carve out a lot of time in your day?
Don't **chuck** your goal, **chunk** it!
Try 10 minutes a few times a day, for example.



Only have 10 minutes? Consider:

- ✓ Walking briskly for 5 minutes, turning around and walking back
- ✓ Dancing (standing or seated) to three songs
- ✓ Getting off your bus early and walking the last stretch

You'll know you're moving enough to help your heart if

- ✓ Your heart is beating faster
- ✓ You're breathing harder
- ✓ You break a sweat

Or, try the talk test:

- ✓ During physical activities, like brisk walking, you should be able to talk, but not sing.
- ✓ During activities such as jogging, you can't say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.



All adults should avoid inactivity.
Start gradually and increase slowly.

Why move more?

Being active can:

- Protect your heart (even if you have heart disease)
- Improve blood flow
- Lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Give you more stamina and ability to cope with stress

If you're inactive, you're nearly twice as likely to develop heart disease than if you're active. Learn more about the benefits of physical activity on the [NHLBI website](#).

Get strong

In addition to aerobic activity, take time to strengthen your muscles. Try to work your leg, hip, back, chest, abdomen, shoulder, and arm muscles. Aim to do muscle strengthening twice a week in addition to your aerobic activities.

Learn more about:

- [CDC Target Heart Rate and Estimated Maximum Heart Rate.](#)
- [Different types of physical activity.](#)
- [Recommendations for children, older people, and pregnant women.](#)

When To Check With Your Doctor

Certain physical activities are safe for most people. If you have a chronic health condition such as heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, or other symptoms, talk with your doctor first.

Learn more about the risks of physical activity for certain groups on the [NHLBI website](#).



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Manage Stress

Managing stress helps your heart health. Set goals with a friend or family member to do a relaxing activity every day, like walking, yoga, or meditation, or participate in an online stress-management program together. Physical activity also helps reduce stress. Talk to a qualified mental health provider or someone else you trust.

Stress happens. You can't always prevent or avoid it. But you can change how you respond to it. Try these tips. You may feel better—and have a healthier heart, too!

Know How Stress Affects Your Body

Whether it's from everyday deadlines, the work-life balancing act, or financial struggles, stress shows up often. Your body reacts to it. Your heart rate increases, your blood vessels narrow—and especially over the long term that's not healthy! Research shows that stress can make us more likely to get heart disease and have a heart attack.

The origins of heart disease begin at a young age, so the earlier in life you learn how to de-stress, the happier your heart will be.

Ongoing stress acts on more than just your heart. It affects everything from your nervous system and hormones to lungs and gut. You may not see the connection, and healthcare providers may not ask about your stress. So try to your body while thinking about what's going on in your life.

Turn On Your Relaxation Response

Did you know your body also has a relaxation response? Your breathing slows and **blood pressure** and heart rate decrease. The good news is you can trigger that response.

Ways to do so often combine breathing deeply and focusing your attention on pleasing thoughts and images.

Here are a few relaxation response techniques to try. You can do these on your own or find a teacher or class to start. They may take some practice!

Progressive muscle relaxation

This approach calls for tightening individual muscles in your body and then releasing the tension. Start by tensing and relaxing your toes, then your calves, and on up to your face. Do one muscle group at a time.



Meditation

This is one of the most-studied approaches for handling stress. There are a variety of ways to do it, including through **mindfulness meditation**. Most meditation styles involve:

- Being in a quiet location with as few distractions as possible
- Being physically comfortable either sitting, lying, or walking
- Focusing your attention on a specific word or set of words, an object, or your breathing
- Having an open attitude and letting distractions, including thoughts, come and go without judgment



Guided imagery

This involves a series of steps that include relaxing and visualizing the details of a calm, peaceful setting, such as a garden. Learn more about stress and try a **guided imagery session**.



Deep breathing

This is something you can do anytime, anywhere. Take in a slow, deep breath, let your stomach or chest expand, then exhale slowly. Repeat a few times.



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Find Your Way to Healthy Relaxing

There's no one way to control stress. You may want to try a stress management program, do yoga, talk to a professional counselor, take an art class, or join friends for a brisk walk. Being in nature is very soothing for some people.

If you're short on time, make a list of three-minute activities you love. Add one to each day of your calendar. Consider:

- Listening to a favorite tune during lunch
- Stretching after a warm shower
- Catching a few minutes of the sunrise or sunset



Finding healthy relaxation exercises is just one way to protect your heart. Combine de-stressing with other **heart-healthy habits**: eat nutritious foods, move your body more and exercise, get enough sleep, and develop a strong social support system.

Know When It's More Than Just Stress

If you're feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope, are using drugs or alcohol more frequently, or are having suicidal thoughts, **seek professional help right away**. Resources are available from the **National Institute of Mental Health**.



www.hearttruth.gov

Healthy Eating for a Healthy Heart

Stress happens. You can't always prevent or avoid it. But you can change how you react to it, and choosing a heart-healthy foods help. When stress hits hard, many of us eat more, and less-than-healthy comfort foods may be the treats we reach for first. But an unhealthy response to stress can be hard on your body, especially your heart. That's why it's smart to try to eat more foods that nourish. It'll make your heart happier, and maybe trim your waistline, too.

Don't know where to start? Let the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) help.

"We have many recipes for healthy and really tasty dishes, plus an award-winning eating plan called Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, or DASH for short," said Charlotte Pratt, Ph.D., M.S., R.D., a nutrition expert at NHLBI. For years, the DASH eating plan has ranked among the U.S. News & World Reports' best diets for healthy living and heart health. It's secret, said Pratt: "Eating nutrient-dense foods and meals that are lower in sodium and saturated fat, rich in fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, and legumes."

"The DASH eating plan is scientifically proven to lower your blood pressure and cholesterol levels," said Pratt. And NHLBI research shows that increasing your physical activity and watching your calories while following DASH will also help you lose weight.

We tend to eat like our friends and family, so ask others close to you to join in your effort to eat healthier.



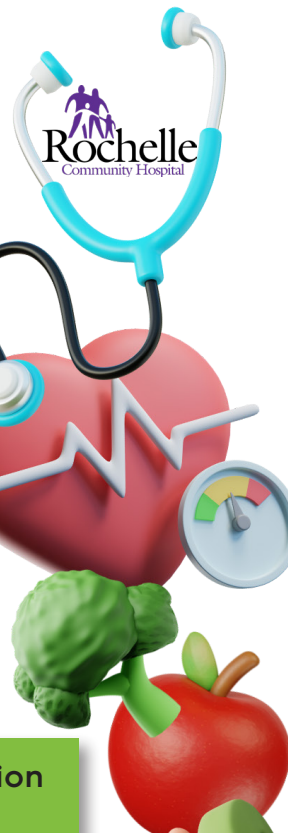
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DASH requires no special foods, and it helps you set daily and weekly nutritional goals using these simple guides:

- Eat vegetables, fruits and whole grains,
- Include fat-free or low-fat dairy products, fish, poultry, beans, nuts and vegetable oils,
- Limit foods that are high in saturated fat, such as fatty meats, full-fat dairy foods and tropical oils such as coconut, palm kernel and palm oils; and
- Limit sugar sweetened drinks and desserts.

To make it easier to follow DASH for life, these tips can help:

- Change gradually. Add one more serving of vegetables a day. Read nutrition labels to choose the food lowest in saturated fat, sodium or salt and added sugar.
- Vary foods high in proteins. Try a mix of lean cuts of meat. Remove the skin from chicken. Eat fish once or twice a week. Eat two or more meals without meat each week.
- Select healthy, tasty snacks. Have a piece of fruit, a few unsalted snacks such as rice cakes, fat-free or low-fat yogurt or raw vegetables with a low-fat dip.



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Click below to download a self-tracking diet comparison and more information on the DASH Diet.

What's on Your Plate?

Learn how your current food habits compare with the DASH eating plan by using this worksheet for 1-2 days. List the food amounts, calories, and sodium for all you eat and drink on a given day. Track your servings by checking off the corresponding number of circles.

To find your specific daily calorie needs, use the Body Weight Planner (niddk.nih.gov/health/). Find the information about calories and the amount of sodium in foods on nutrition facts labels, mobile applications, or online.

TODAY'S DATE: / /

GRAINS
4-8 SERVINGS PER DAY

VEGETABLES
4-5 SERVINGS PER DAY

FRUITS
4-5 SERVINGS PER DAY

DAIRY
2-3 SERVINGS PER DAY

LEAN MEATS, FISH, POULTRY, AND EGGS
4-6 SERVINGS OR LESS PER DAY

FATS AND OILS
2-3 SERVINGS PER DAY

NUTS, SEEDS, AND LEGUMES
4-5 SERVINGS PER WEEK

SWEETS AND ADDED SUGARS
5 SERVINGS OR LESS PER WEEK

TOTAL CALORIES _____ **TOTAL SODIUM (MG)** _____

The DASH Eating Plan is a heart healthy approach that has been scientifically proven to lower blood pressure and lower other health risks. To learn more, go to www.dash-diet.org.

Following the DASH Eating Plan FOR 1,800 TO 2,000 CALORIES PER DAY

Grains
4-8 SERVINGS PER DAY

Sources of fiber and magnesium
SERVING SIZE: 1 slice bread, 1 oz dry cereal, 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal

Vegetables
4-5 SERVINGS PER DAY

Sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber
SERVING SIZE: 1 cup raw leafy vegetable, 1/2 cup cut up raw or cooked vegetable

Fruits
4-5 SERVINGS PER DAY

Sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber
SERVING SIZE: 1 medium fruit, 1/2 cup dried fruit (unsweetened), 1/2 cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit, or fruit juice

Dairy
2-3 SERVINGS PER DAY

Sources of calcium and protein
SERVING SIZE: 1 cup milk, 1 cup yogurt, 1 1/2 oz cheese

Lean Meats, Fish, Poultry, and Eggs
4-6 SERVINGS OR LESS PER DAY

Sources of protein and magnesium
SERVING SIZE: 1 oz cooked meats, fish, or poultry, 1 egg

Fats and Oils
2-3 SERVINGS PER DAY

Sources of energy and vitamin E
SERVING SIZE: 1 tsp soft margarine, 1 tsp vegetable oil, 1 tsp mayonnaise, 2 tsp salad dressing

Nuts, Seeds, and Legumes
4-5 SERVINGS PER WEEK

Sources of energy, magnesium, protein, and fiber
SERVING SIZE: 1/4 cup or 1 1/2 oz nuts (unsalted), 2 tsp peanut butter, 2 tsp or 1/2 oz seeds

Sweets and Added Sugars
5 SERVINGS OR LESS PER WEEK

Sweets should be low in fat
SERVING SIZE: 1 tsp sugar, 1 tsp jelly or jam, 1/2 cup sorbet, gelatin, 1 cup lemonade

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Quit Smoking

To help you quit, ask others for support or join an online support group. Research shows that people are much more likely to quit if their spouse, friend, or sibling does. Social support online can help you quit. All states have quit lines with trained counselors — call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). You'll find many free resources to help you quit, such as apps, a motivational text service, and a chat line at BeTobaccoFree.hhs.gov and Smokefree.gov.

If you need extra motivation to quit, consider those around you: Breathing other people's smoke, called secondhand smoke, is dangerous. Many adult nonsmokers die of stroke, heart disease, and lung cancer caused by secondhand smoke.

Improve Sleep

Sleeping 7–9 hours a night helps to improve heart health. De-stressing will help you sleep, as does getting a 30-minute daily dose of sunlight. Take a walk instead of a late afternoon nap! Family members and friends: remind each other to turn off the screen and stick to a regular bedtime. Instead of looking at your phone or the TV before bed, relax by listening to music, reading, or taking a bath.

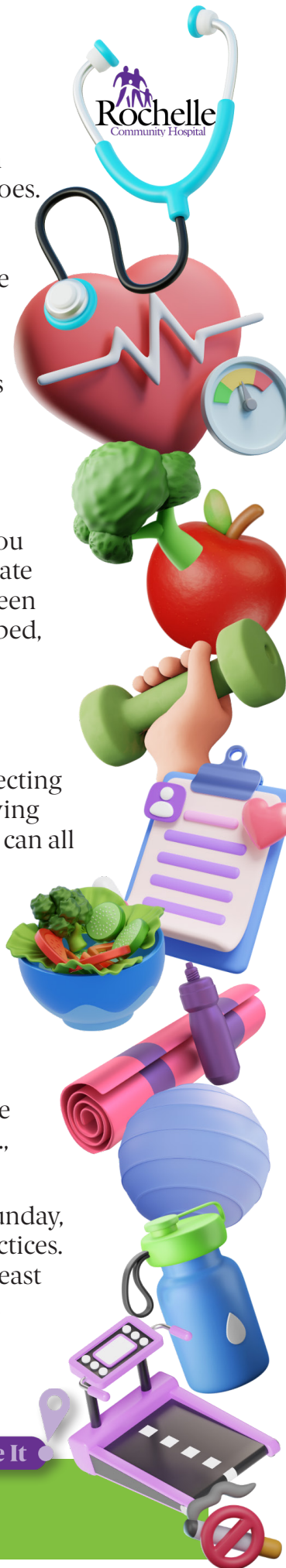
Make Heart Health Part of Your Self-Care Routine

Devoting a little time every day to care for yourself can go a long way toward protecting the health of your heart. Simple self-care, such as taking a moment to de-stress, giving yourself time to move more, preparing healthier meals, and not cheating on sleep can all benefit your heart.

And that's a good thing, because heart disease is largely preventable and focusing on improving your heart health has never been more important. Heart disease is a leading cause of death for women and men in the United States, and many Americans remain at risk of getting it, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

“Studies show self-care routines, such as taking a daily walk and keeping doctor's appointments, help us keep our blood pressure, sugar, and cholesterol levels in the healthy range and reduce our risk of heart disease and stroke,” said Gina Wei, M.D., NHLBI's acting director of cardiovascular sciences.

It may be easier than you think to “put your heart” into your daily routine. Each Sunday, look at your week's schedule and carve out 30 minutes daily for heart-healthy practices. Take a yoga class, prepare a heart-healthy recipe, schedule your bedtime to get at least seven hours of sleep, or make a medication checklist. Then seek out support from others, even if it's online or via a phone call, to help you stick to your goals.



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Track your Heart Health Numbers, Together

Keeping a log of your blood pressure, weight goals, physical activity, and, if you have diabetes, your blood sugar will help you stay on a heart-healthy track. Ask your friends or family to join you in the effort. **Check out NHLBI's My Heart Health Tracker.**

My Heart Health Tracker

Keep track of important numbers related to your heart health.



Name:

Note: ❤️ = Normal values

Weight	Date			
	Result			
Body Mass Index (BMI) ❤️ 18.5 to 24.9	Date			
	Result			
Waist Measurement ❤️ Men—40 inches (102 centimeters) or less ❤️ Women—35 inches (88 centimeters) or less	Date			
	Result			
Blood Pressure ❤️ Less than 120/80 mm Hg	Date			
	Result			
Tests to measure cholesterol				
Triglycerides ❤️ Less than 150 mg/dL	Date			
	Result			
Non-HDL cholesterol ❤️ Less than 130 mg/dL	Date			
	Result			
HDL cholesterol ❤️ Above 40 mg/dL in men ❤️ Above 50 mg/dL in women	Date			
	Result			
Tests to check sugar in the blood for diabetes				
Blood Glucose ❤️ Less than 100 mg/dL	Date			
	Result			
A1C ❤️ Less than 5.7%	Date			
	Result			
Other tests	Date			
	Result			



NIH National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



hearttruth.gov

Are You Heart Smart?

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What to Know for a Healthier Heart

Keeping your heart healthy starts with living a heart-healthy lifestyle. But first, you need to get smart about your heart. Knowing what causes heart disease, what puts you at risk for it, and how you can reduce those risks can help you make informed decisions to protect your heart and keep it strong.

Want to test your knowledge? Take this short Heart Smart Quiz:

Heart Smart Quiz

- 1. True or False?** High blood pressure is also known as hypertension and occurs when your blood pressure is consistently 130/80 mm Hg or higher.
- 2. True or False?** Your body mass index, or BMI, shows if your weight is in a healthy range for your height and is one measure of your future risk for heart disease.
- 3. True or False?** Cholesterol helps make hormones, vitamin D, and substances to help you digest foods. Your body needs it for good health, but in the right amounts.
- 4. True or False?** Eating lots of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, using fat-free or low-fat dairy products, and limiting foods high in saturated fat or sugar-sweetened beverages are all part of a heart-healthy diet.
- 5. True or False?** Not getting enough sleep or getting poor quality sleep on a regular basis increases the risk of having high blood pressure, heart disease, and other medical conditions.
- 6. True or False?** To strengthen their heart, adults should aim to get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity such as brisk walking each week.

Answer Key: All answers are *True*.

How did you do? Knowing your own risk factors for heart disease can help guide your lifestyle choices, so talk to your healthcare provider to make sure you're clear. Just as important: know your numbers. Your weight, waist size, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels all affect your heart. If they aren't where they should be, make a pledge to begin improving them.

