

HOW TO KEEP YOUR HEART HEALTHY

Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death for U.S. adults? But there's also some good news. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), the rate of death from heart disease is declining because many people now pay more attention to taking care of their heart. Knowing the causes and risk factors for heart disease can help you prevent it and keep your heart healthy.

How Do I Know if I'm at Risk?

Several factors may increase your risk for heart disease. Answering the following questions may help you find out if you are at risk:

- Are you over age 65?
- Do you have a family history of heart disease?
- Do you have diabetes?
- Do you smoke?
- Is your total cholesterol level over 240?
- Is your blood pressure level over 140/90?
- Do you exercise less than 30 minutes a day five days a week?
- Are you overweight?

If you answered yes to at least two of these questions, you may have a higher risk of developing heart disease.

How Can I Lower My Risk?

Although you can't change your age or family history, many risk factors are within your control. The AHA suggests taking the following steps to help keep your heart strong and healthy:

- Quit smoking. According to the AHA, your risk for a heart attack doubles if you smoke. And if you are middle-aged and smoke, your risk of dying from heart disease is tripled.
- Watch your diet. Simple changes in your diet can significantly lower your risk for heart disease. Aim for low saturated and trans fats, low cholesterol, and lots of fruits, vegetables and whole-grain foods.

- Get moving. Regular exercise strengthens your heart, improves circulation and works with your diet to help you maintain a healthy weight. The AHA recommends that healthy adults get 30 to 60 minutes of aerobic exercise on most days of the week.
- Visit your doctor. Your doctor can help you identify early symptoms of heart disease with certain tests and screenings. See your doctor regularly to help monitor your risk.

What Can I Do to Have a Healthy Heart?

If you have heart disease, the Cigna Your Health First Chronic Condition Support[®] program for heart disease may be helpful to you.

The Cigna Your Health First program for heart disease can provide you with the self-management tools and educational materials you need to help manage the condition more effectively. Check with your employer to see if this program is available to you.

Did You Know?

The American Heart Association has an idea for your next meal: have a helping of heart-friendly antioxidants. A study published in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association* suggests that eating antioxidant-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains may help lower your risk for heart disease. So when planning your meals, think about adding some of these colorful foods to the menu!

