

Promises for Healthy Hearts

How Hispanics/Latinos Can Prevent Heart Disease



National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



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Introduction



Hispanics/Latinos and Heart Disease

Heart disease is a serious health problem and the leading cause of death for Americans. Some communities are disproportionately affected by heart disease and its risk factors, including Latinos. Most people aren't aware that they're at risk for heart disease. A heart attack or stroke may seem sudden, but the truth is that heart disease happens over many years. It often starts at a very young age.

This booklet explains what heart disease is and has helpful tips to improve your health. When you learn and use information that can improve your health, you have hope for a healthy future. This booklet is for the Hispanic/Latino community but throughout the manual the term Latino will be used.

Risk Factors

Being inactive, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, smoking, and diabetes can increase the risk for heart disease, so they're called risk factors. You can reduce many risks by making lifestyle changes. But you need information and support from others.

Learn More

The Heart Truth[®] is a national health education program that raises awareness about heart disease and encourages people to live a heart-healthy lifestyle. Visit www.hearttruth.gov to find educational materials about heart disease to share in your community and resources to help promote American Heart Month in February.

From the Ramirez Family to Yours

This booklet is filled with practical information that can help you reduce your risk for heart disease. You will meet the Ramirez family and their neighbors, who share what they did to prevent and control their risk factors. Join them, and take steps to prevent heart disease in your family.

Hope for a Healthy Future

Taking steps to prevent heart disease at any age is important. Caring for your heart is one of the most important things you can do for your health and the health of your family.

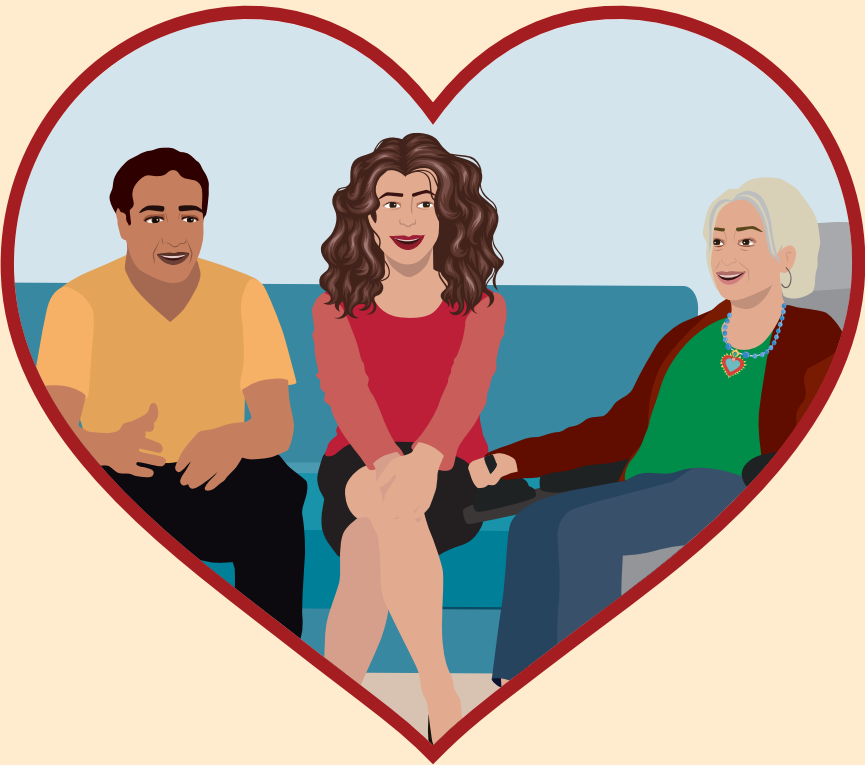
Promise to prevent or reduce the risk of heart disease. Future generations are counting on you.



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SECTION 1

Knowledge Is Power: Know Your Risk for Heart Disease



Section 1

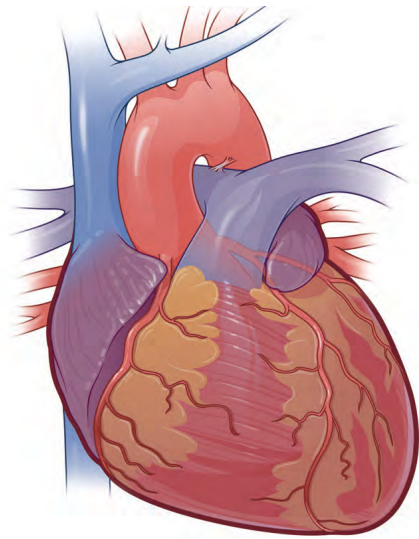


Knowledge Is Power: Know Your Risk for Heart Disease

Knowing whether you're at risk for heart disease can empower you to do something about it. This section will help you learn about risks for heart disease.

The Amazing Heart

Your heart is one of your strongest muscles. In a single day, it beats about 100,000 times and pumps about 2,000 gallons of blood throughout your body. Blood carries the nutrients and oxygen your body need to keep going. The heart is so important. You want to keep it healthy.



What Is Heart Disease?

The term “heart disease” includes a variety of heart problems. The most common is coronary heart disease, which is when a person has “clogged arteries.” This kind of heart disease develops over many years, as the blood vessels going to the heart become narrow and clogged. It’s what we talk about in this booklet.

Carmen

The doctor told me that I have high blood pressure and diabetes. Both put me at risk for heart disease. Now that I know, I'm taking steps to lower my risk.



Controlling Your Risks

Risk factors are traits and habits that make you more likely to develop heart disease. Some risk factors you can do something about; others you can't change. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chances of developing heart disease.

Are You at Risk for Heart Disease?

Check all your risk factors below.

Risk factors	Yes	Not Sure
Factors you can try to control		
Being overweight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not getting enough physical activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having high cholesterol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having high blood pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smoking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Factors you can't change		
Age (45 years or older for men, 55 years or older for women)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family history (Father or brother with heart disease before age 55, mother or sister with heart disease before age 65)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

NOTE



The more risk factors you checked, the greater your chances of developing heart disease.

Promises to Lower Your Risk for Heart Disease

Here are promises Carmen and her family made and are doing to lower their risk for heart disease:



Lose weight

“We eat smaller portions. If we’re still hungry, we have salad with a low-calorie dressing.”



Get 2 hours and 30 minutes of physical activity a week

“We walk together briskly after dinner every night.”



Eat less saturated fat and sodium

“I bake chicken instead of frying.”

“I use herbs instead of salt to season our food.”



Eat more fruits and vegetables

“We enjoy them with meals, as a snack, or for dessert.”



Limit beverages and foods with sugar

“We cut back on sweets, such as doughnuts, cookies, and soda.”



Quit smoking

“Our home and our car are smoke-free.”



Have regular checkups

“We track our weight, waist size, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar (for diabetes) using our Heart Health Cards” (on page 76).

NOTE



You can lower your risk, too. By making some small but important changes, you and your family will have longer, healthier lives.

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SECTION 2

React in Time to Heart Attack Signs



Section 2



React in Time to Heart Attack Signs!

Despite our best efforts, heart disease can cause a heart attack. If you have symptoms of a heart attack, the sooner you get help, the better. Heart attacks can seriously damage the heart and can be deadly. That's why it's important to know the warning signs of a heart attack and what to do if you or someone near you has symptoms.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

The most common heart attack warning sign for men and women is chest pain or discomfort. Sometimes the pain or discomfort is mild, and the warning signs come and go. The signs and symptoms of a heart attack can develop suddenly or develop slowly, even over weeks.

Carmen

My aunt died of a heart attack. It's important for everyone to know the heart attack warning signs. My doctor told me that it's best to call 9-1-1 immediately if I have any of the signs.



Section 2

If you feel any of the signs listed below call, 9–1–1 right away. Anyone with heart attack signs needs to get medical care immediately. Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, have it checked out.

Every minute counts!

Know the Heart Attack Warning Signs

Your **chest** may hurt or feel squeezed.



You may feel discomfort in one or both **arms**, or your back or stomach.



You may feel discomfort in your **neck**, shoulders, or jaw.



You may feel like you **can't breathe**.



You may feel **light-headed** or dizzy or break out in a cold sweat.



You may feel sick to your **stomach**.



My Heart Attack Survival Plan

Follow these steps to prepare for a possible heart attack:

- **Learn** the heart attack warning signs.
- **Think** about what to do in case of a heart attack.
- **Talk with family and friends** about the heart attack warning signs and the importance of calling 9-1-1 (or my local emergency number) right away.
- **Talk to a healthcare provider** about my risk of a heart attack and what to do if I experience any of the heart attack warning signs.
- **Fill out** the “My Emergency Card” and share it with my family.



Aspirin: Take With Caution

If you're thinking about taking aspirin to prevent a heart attack, talk to your healthcare provider first. The provider can determine if you should take it or another medicine and at what dose.

My Emergency Card

My Emergency Card

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Home Phone: _____

Local Clinic/Hospital: _____

Emergency Contacts:

Name	Relationship	Phone

Do you have any of the following conditions?

Heart Disease: Yes No

Previous Heart Attack: Yes No

High Blood Pressure: Yes No

High Cholesterol: Yes No

Diabetes: Yes No

Other: _____

Emergency Numbers

Family Doctor: _____

Phone: _____

Local Clinic/Hospital: _____

Phone: _____

Fire Department: _____

Local Police Department: _____

List current medications, known allergies, and any other information

Current Medications: _____

Known Allergies: _____

Other Information: _____

Cut along dotted lines. Fold card in half and paste with a glue stick (FOLD 1).
 Fold in half again to make your own personal wallet card (FOLD 2).

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SECTION 3

Get Energized! Say YES to Physical Activity



Section 3



Get Energized! Say YES to Physical Activity

Being physically active on a regular basis is one of the best ways to keep your heart, lungs, and whole body healthy. It makes your heart stronger and lowers your risk for heart disease.

It also helps with your:

- weight
- blood pressure
- blood sugar
- stress level
- energy
- sleep

How to Start?

Any activity is better than none! But the “intensity,” or how hard your body is working, makes a difference. Increase your intensity gradually. If you have a health problem, check with your healthcare provider before increasing your physical activity.

- Light-intensity activity, like cooking or cleaning the house, usually doesn’t require much effort. **Start light, if that’s what you’re comfortable doing or what your provider recommends.**
- Moderate-intensity activity, like taking a brisk walk, makes you breathe harder and your heart beat faster. You can still talk, but singing would be hard. **Work up to at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a week.**
- During vigorous-intensity activity, like playing a game of basketball or jogging, you can’t say more than a few words without stopping for a breath. **You need only 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous activity a week.**

Promise to Set Goals for Yourself

Be specific about what you'll do, how you'll do it, and when you'll start. If you're aiming for 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a week, you can do 30 minutes, 5 times a week, for example. But find what works best for you. Having a busy day? Do 10 minutes of activity a few times that day.

Doña Fela

I don't wait until the end of the day to be active. I'm active throughout the day. I take the stairs instead of the elevator, and I walk at lunch. it adds up.



Promise to Make Physical Activity a Habit

Check off the activities you plan to do or add your own.

- Brisk walking before, after work, or during lunch
- Dancing or doing jumping jacks in my living room
- Gardening
- Taking a dance class
- Riding a stationary bike
- Going for a bike ride
- Taking an exercise class online
- Taking an exercise class at a gym or recreation center
- Jumping rope before dinner
- Playing sports after work
- Using a treadmill before heading home
- Organizing a walking club (see page 25)
- _____
- _____

Write down the number of minutes you're active each day.

Week #	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Total
Example	5	5	10	10	15	15	15	75
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5								
Week 6								
Week 7								
Week 8								

How to Organize a Walking Club

Walking can improve our health, reduce our stress level, and increase our energy level. Walking is inexpensive and safe and requires no special equipment. Having regular walking buddies or being part of a walking club can help us stay motivated.

The benefits of walking as a group

- Many people find it fun to walk with others.
- Club members help each other to keep the pace and stick to the program.
- You get to spend time with friends or make new friends who also want to be active.
- Club members develop and achieve fitness goals together.
- Your club can plan fun activities and themes, which will increase participation.

How to organize a walking club

- Tell your family members, friends, and neighbors that you're starting a walking club. Use your social media accounts to reach people. Or ask your employer about organizing a walking club at work. Advertise your club through your religious organization, community center, or neighborhood bulletins and online listservs. Put up posters.
- When you reach out to people, tell them the time and location of your first meeting. At that meeting, you'll share ideas and set goals. You'll also decide on the day, place, and time you'll meet and the distance you'll walk each day. Brainstorm a slogan or catchy name for your club. Think of fun and challenging activities that will keep members motivated.
- When your club is organized, invite the Your Heart, Your Life course participants to join. Ask them to bring their friends and family.
- Encourage different members to lead the group.

How to Organize a Walking Club (continued)

Where to walk

Pick a location that is well-lit and has sidewalks. The neighborhood where you take your classes or the track at a local school might be good options. You may change the route to keep it fun, but you should always meet at the same time and place.

Have a backup plan for when the weather isn't good, such as walking in a mall.

Keep it fun!

Have special walks each month to celebrate events, such as:

- Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15–October 15)
- National Wear Red Day® (first Friday in February) to raise awareness about heart disease in women
- American Heart Month (February)
- Other important or fun celebrations

Create theme walks, such as:

- Nature walks
- Crazy outfit walks
- Dance walks
- Use your imagination!

Stay on target

- Encourage conversation and fun, while keeping a brisk walking pace.
- Suggest that members track their progress on paper, online, or with a fitness app on their phone or computer. Record dates, distance, number of steps (if they want), and how they felt after walking. Keeping track can motivate everyone to improve.

How to Organize a Walking Club (continued)

Health and Safety

- Stay alert. Be familiar with your surroundings.
- Stay in well-lit and well-maintained places.
- When exercising outdoors, remind members to use sunscreen or wear protective clothing. Watch for stinging insects, such as bees and wasps.
- Keep an eye on the weather and the air quality, especially if anyone has asthma.
- Encourage members to wear comfortable, supportive shoes and bring a reusable bottle of water.
- Start slowly. Gradually increase the time and effort you put into any activity.
- Encourage everyone to warm up, stretch, and cool down.

If You're Pregnant

Physical activity is good for your health, mood, and weight before, during, and after pregnancy. But talk to your healthcare provider about what physical activities are safe for you during this time.

Virginia

I'm 32, and I had a healthy baby 3 months ago. When I was pregnant, my doctor said to check with her before I get back to my running routine after having my baby. Meanwhile, I've been walking, which helps.



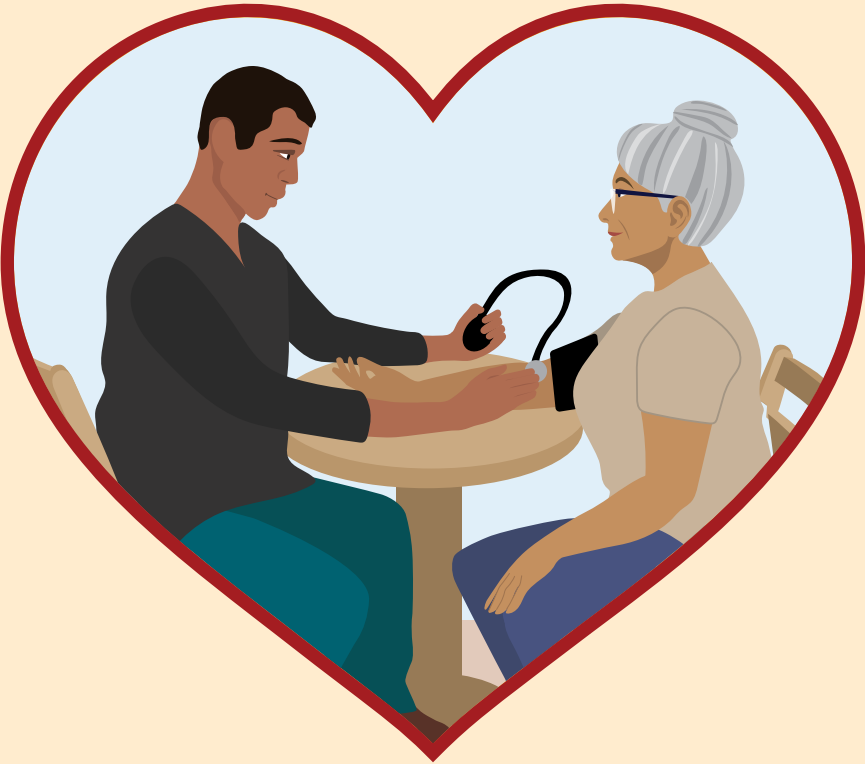
Strengthen Your Muscles and Bones

At least twice a week, try to do activities that specifically strengthen your muscles and bones.

- Doing push-ups and sit-ups, lifting weights, heavy gardening, and yoga are some examples of muscle-strengthening activities.
- Running, walking, jumping rope, and lifting weights also strengthen your bones.

SECTION 4

Control Your Blood Pressure



Section 4



Control Your Blood Pressure

Did you know that controlling your blood pressure can lower your chances of a heart attack or stroke? This section will show you how to prevent or control high blood pressure.

Mariano

The doctor said that I have a blood pressure of 145/92. The numbers were my only warning that I had high blood pressure. I didn't have any symptoms. Getting my blood pressure checked was easy and didn't hurt.



What Is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of your arteries. Blood pressure is needed to move the blood through your body so that blood can get to all parts of the body's organs.

Why Is High Blood Pressure Dangerous?

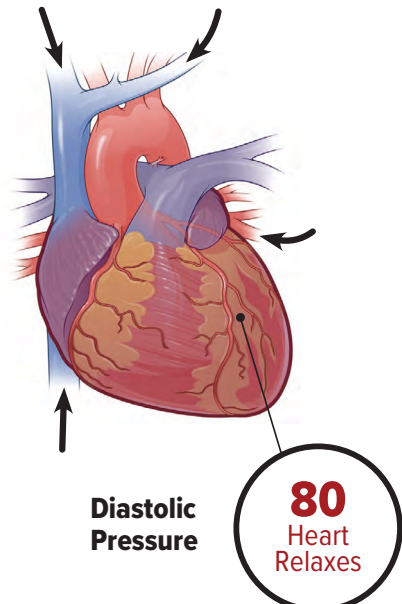
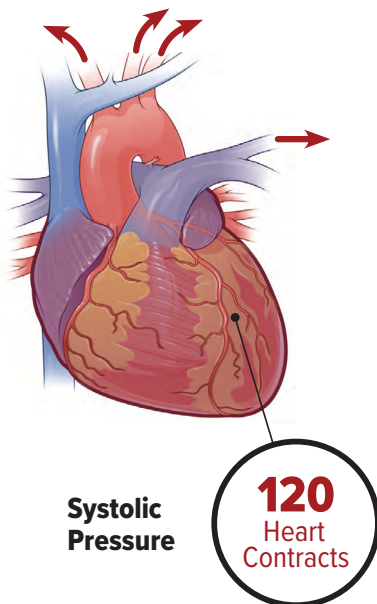
High blood pressure is also called “hypertension.” It makes your heart have to work harder than it should to get blood to all parts of your body. High blood pressure is known as the “silent killer,” because it has no symptoms.

If not treated, high blood pressure raises your chances of

- stroke
- heart attack
- kidney problems
- eye problems
- death

Blood Pressure Numbers

A blood pressure reading has two numbers, such as “120 over 80.” The first or top number is your systolic (sis-TOL-ik) pressure. That’s your pressure during a heartbeat. The other number, called diastolic (di-a-STOL-ik), is the pressure between beats, when your heart is resting.



Know Your Blood Pressure Numbers

- For most adults, a healthy blood pressure is usually below 120/80 mm Hg.
- If your numbers are often higher than that, you may have high blood pressure.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about what your numbers are, and write them down.
- If your healthcare provider says that you have high blood pressure, ask how you can lower it or keep it under control.
- Have your blood pressure checked at each healthcare visit and ask if you should monitor it at home. It's quick, easy, and painless.
- Keep track of your numbers using the “My Heart Health Card” on page 76.

The Ramirez Family Takes Five Steps to Prevent or Lower and Control High Blood Pressure

This family plan can help you prevent high blood pressure. If you already have high blood pressure, it can help you lower and control it. Choose two or three of the steps that you will take. Add more over time.

Step 1. Cut Down on Sodium

Check Nutrition Facts labels, so you can choose foods that are low-sodium, reduced-sodium, or have no added salt.

- Choose foods with a lower Percent Daily Value for sodium.
 - A Percent Daily Value of 5 or less is low.
 - A Percent Daily Value of 20 or more is high.
- Limit your sodium intake to 2,300 milligrams (mg) or less per day. If you have high blood pressure, you may need to limit sodium even more. Talk to your healthcare provider about what amount of sodium is right for you or your family.

Section 4

Read the Nutrition Facts label to choose foods lower in sodium. Compare the Nutrition Facts labels for regular soup and reduced-sodium soup:

Which would you choose?

Reduced-Sodium Soup

Amount Per Serving	
Calories	120
<small>% Daily Value*</small>	
Total Fat 1g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 430mg	19%

Regular Soup

Amount Per Serving	
Calories	160
<small>% Daily Value*</small>	
Total Fat 7g	9%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 710mg	31%

The regular soup has much more sodium than the reduced-sodium soup.

Step 2. Eat Heart-Healthy Foods

Each day, cut back a little on the amount of sodium in your foods.

- Buy fruits and vegetables for snacks instead of salty chips and crackers.
- Buy fresh, frozen, or no-salt-added canned vegetables.
- Choose fewer processed and canned meats like hot dogs, sausage, bacon, bologna, ham, corned beef hash, and scrapple.
- Season foods with herbs and spices instead of salt.
- Rinse canned vegetables to reduce the amount of sodium.
- Use reduced-sodium bouillon cubes, soy sauce, and ketchup.
- Take the salt shaker off the table.

Carmen

To make food taste good without salt, use cilantro, cumin, fresh garlic, parsley, onion, green pepper, oregano, and a dash of hot pepper. Everyone in my family now likes the taste of foods with less salt.



Step 3. Limit Alcohol

Drinking alcohol can increase your risk of having high blood pressure, an irregular heart rhythm or rate, and stroke.

- Men who drink should have no more than two drinks a day.
- Women who drink should have no more than one drink a day.
- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding shouldn't drink any alcohol.

Step 4. Watch Your Weight

Take steps to reach or maintain a healthy weight.

- Eat smaller portions.
- Eat slowly.
- All adults should aim for at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate physical activity (like brisk walking) a week. Increase your activity gradually.

Step 5. Take Your Medicines

If you have high blood pressure, take your medicine the way your healthcare provider tells you.

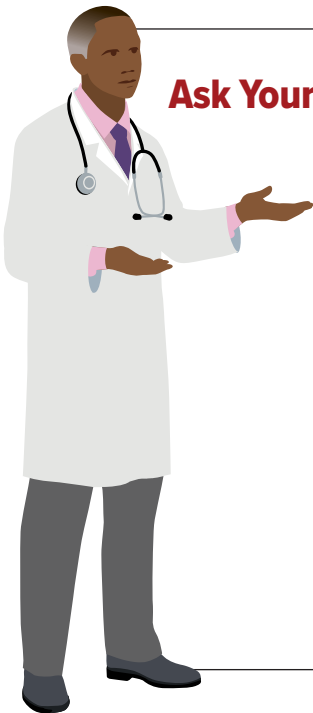
- Don't share medicine with friends or family.
- If you can't afford your medicine, let your provider know. There may be programs to help you buy your medicine.
- Use notes and other reminders to take your medicine. Ask your family to help you with reminder phone calls or texts.

When you go to a healthcare provider, take all of your medicine bottles with you.

NOTE



Your health and your family's health are priceless.
Make a promise to follow the five steps.



Ask Your Healthcare Provider These Questions

When your provider gives you medicine for high blood pressure, ask:

Name of medicine _____

How much to take _____

When to take it _____

What to eat or drink with it _____

If your other medicine can be taken safely at the same time _____

If problems occur, call this number immediately _____

I Promise to Control My Blood Pressure

Check two or three things you promise to do. Add more over time.

Add Spice—Not Salt—to Your Life

- Season foods with herbs and spices like garlic, black pepper, oregano, and onion instead of salt.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables instead of salty snacks.

Aim for a Healthy Weight

- Reach a healthy weight.
- Eat smaller portions—eat slowly.
- Get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity 5 days a week.
- Limit alcohol.

If You Have High Blood Pressure

- Check your blood pressure often.
- Take your medicine the way your healthcare provider tells you to.

SECTION 5

Keep Your Cholesterol in Check



Section 5



Keep Your Cholesterol in Check

This section will help you learn how to have healthy cholesterol levels. Unhealthy levels of cholesterol make a heart attack or stroke more likely.

Virginia

I have learned that eating foods lower in saturated fat and increasing my physical activity can help me keep my cholesterol level and weight in a healthy range and prevent heart disease.



What Is Cholesterol?

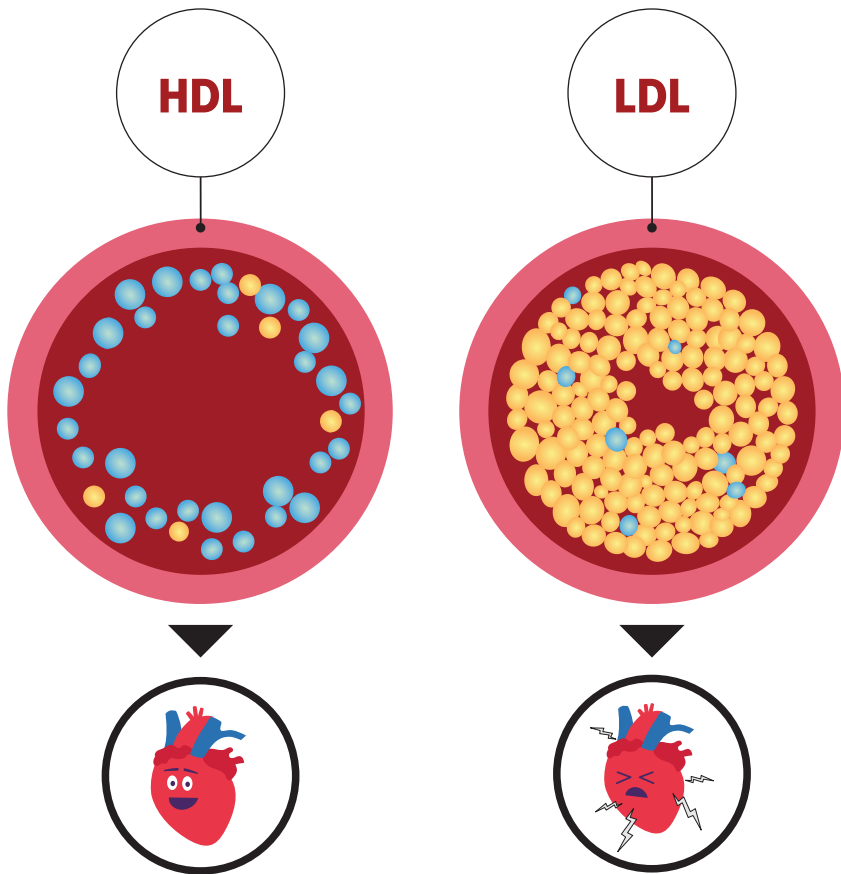
Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance in your body. Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs. Cholesterol is carried through your blood in two different “packages.” One of these packages is a low-density lipoprotein (LDL), also called bad cholesterol. The other is a high-density lipoprotein (HDL), called good cholesterol.

Why Is HDL Good and LDL Bad?

HDL normally helps your body get rid of cholesterol, so it doesn't build up inside your arteries.

But LDL puts cholesterol inside your arteries. Over time, cholesterol and other substances clog your arteries. That can cause chest pain or even a heart attack.

You can control your cholesterol levels. Start by finding out what your cholesterol levels are.



Have Your Cholesterol Checked

Ask your healthcare provider about getting a blood test called a lipid profile. It tells you your levels of total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and HDL cholesterol.

Your goal for your LDL and total cholesterol levels depends on your other health conditions, such as if you have high blood pressure, but also on your age and gender. Your healthcare provider can tell you what your LDL level should be.

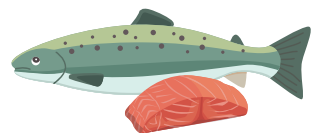
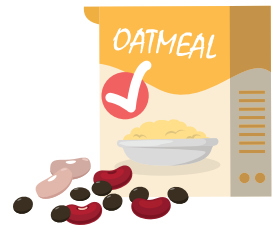
Reaching Healthy Cholesterol Levels

You can make changes in what you eat and in your activities. This will help you keep your cholesterol at healthy levels.

NOTE



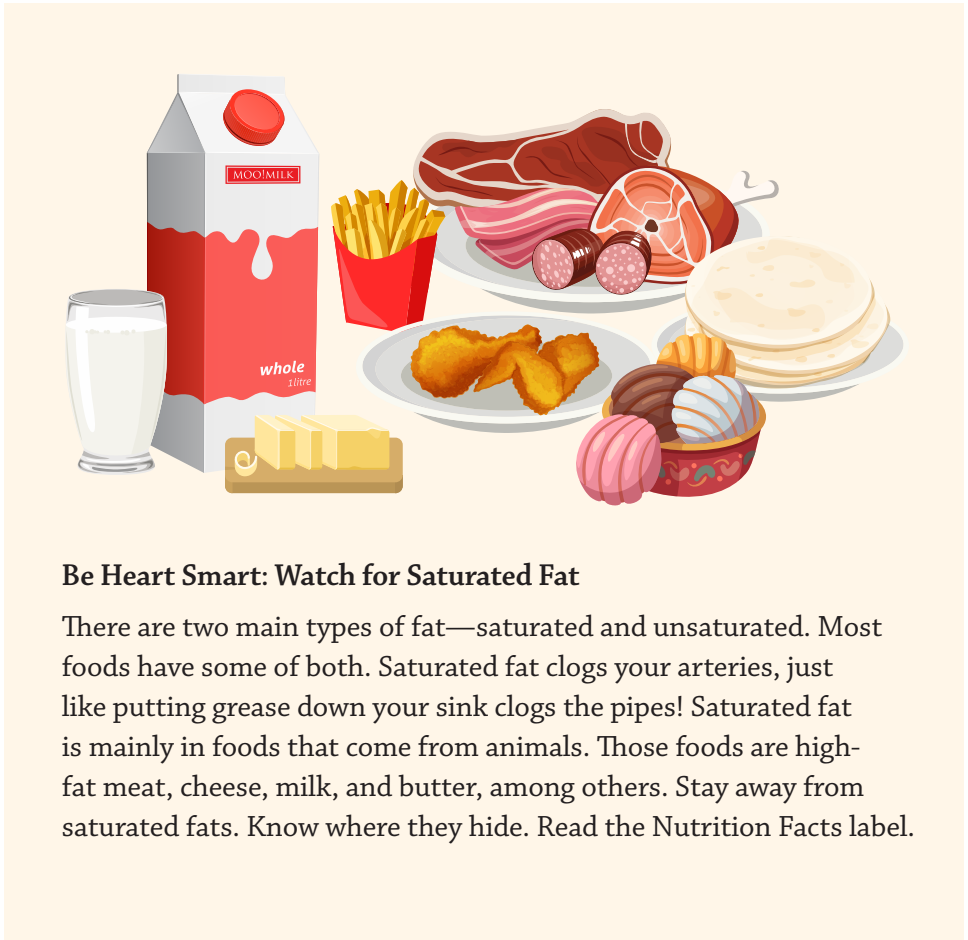
For people who don't have other risk factors, a healthy total cholesterol is less than 200 mg/dL.



The Ramirez Family Takes Four Steps to Keep Their Cholesterol in Check

Step 1. Cut Back on Foods High in Saturated Fat

Start making a few healthy changes at a time.



Be Heart Smart: Watch for Saturated Fat

There are two main types of fat—saturated and unsaturated. Most foods have some of both. Saturated fat clogs your arteries, just like putting grease down your sink clogs the pipes! Saturated fat is mainly in foods that come from animals. Those foods are high-fat meat, cheese, milk, and butter, among others. Stay away from saturated fats. Know where they hide. Read the Nutrition Facts label.

Section 5

Here are foods that have little or no saturated fat:

- Fat-free and low-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt
- Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Fish*
- Turkey and chicken without skin
- Lean cuts of meat
- Beans and lentils



Cut back on these foods:

- Whole milk, cheese, and ice cream
- Butter and stick margarine
- Fatty meat like bacon, regular ground beef, and pork chops
- Beef or pork sausages, chorizo, hot dogs, and bologna
- Liver, tongue, and other organ meats
- Lard, fatback, bacon grease, and coconut oil
- Foods fried in grease or lard, like chicken or fish



*Pregnant and nursing mothers: Talk to your healthcare provider to find out the types of fish you can eat that are lower in mercury. Mercury may be harmful to your baby.

Step 2. Read the Nutrition Facts Labels

Choose foods lower in saturated fat.

Compare the Nutrition Facts labels for an English muffin and a doughnut:

Which would you choose?

English Muffin

Nutrition Facts	
6 servings per container	
Serving size	1 muffin (57g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	130
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 1g	1%
Saturated Fat 0.4g	2%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 240mg	10%
Total Carbohydrate 25g	9%
Dietary Fiber 2g	7%
Total Sugars 2g	
Includes 2g Added Sugars	4%
Protein 5g	10%
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 93mg	8%
Iron 2mg	10%
Potassium 62mg	2%

Doughnut

Nutrition Facts	
1 servings per container	
Serving size	1 doughnut (85g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	290
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 16g	21%
Saturated Fat 4g	20%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 20mg	7%
Sodium 390mg	17%
Total Carbohydrate 33g	12%
Dietary Fiber < 1g	3%
Total Sugars 18g	
Includes 16g Added Sugars	32%
Protein 5g	10%
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 21mg	2%
Iron 1.5mg	8%
Potassium 67mg	2%

The doughnut is higher in saturated fat.

Step 3. Be Physically Active

Aim for at least 30 minutes a day.

Step 4. Aim for a Healthy Weight

Lose weight if you're overweight.

What Are Triglycerides?

Triglycerides are another type of fat in your blood. High triglyceride levels can raise your risk for heart disease. Your lipid profile blood test will measure your triglyceride level.

These steps can help you control your triglyceride level:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get regular physical activity.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet that's low in saturated fat.
- Limit sugar and foods that are highly processed.
- Don't smoke. If you do smoke, quit.
- Limit your alcohol.

Ana

The doctor told me my triglyceride level is very high. So I cut back on sweets, soda, and alcohol. I'm also going for more walks, and my levels are coming down.



NOTE



A triglyceride level above 150 mg/dL is high. Normal is less than 75 mg/dL.

What Is Metabolic Syndrome?

Having metabolic syndrome increases your risk for heart disease and stroke. It also increases your risk for diabetes.

Ana

My doctor told me that I have metabolic syndrome. Five risk factors make up this syndrome and can cause trouble for your heart. You need only three of the five risk factors to have metabolic syndrome. I am working to beat it.



Check which you have:

- A large waistline
 - Greater than 35 inches for women
 - Greater than 40 inches for men
- A triglyceride level of 150 mg/dL or more
- Low HDL (good) cholesterol level
 - Less than 50 mg/dL for women
 - Less than 40 mg/dL for men
- Blood pressure of 130/85 mm Hg or more
- High fasting blood sugar of 100 mg/dL or more

NOTE



If you have three or more of these risk factors, talk to your healthcare provider about metabolic syndrome.

My Family Promise to Lower Cholesterol Levels

Check the steps you promise to take to lower your cholesterol and keep it low. Start with a few changes, and add more over time.

- Get my cholesterol level checked.
- Talk to a healthcare provider about what my cholesterol numbers mean.
- Read Nutrition Facts labels to choose healthier foods.
- Bake, broil, braise, roast, or grill food instead of frying.
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Do at least 30 minutes of physical activity 5 times a week.
- Choose water, unsweetened tea, sparkling water, or regular water instead of soda or sweet tea.

SECTION 6

Embrace Your Health!

Aim for a Healthy Weight



Section 6



Embrace Your Health!

Aim for a Healthy Weight

Did you know that losing even a small amount of weight can lessen weight-related health problems? This section will discuss healthy ways to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight.

Virginia

My whole family has gradually gained weight. We eat a lot of high-fat foods and aren't very physically active. The doctor told me that being overweight affects my health and my heart. My family and I are going to make small changes that will help us lose the extra pounds.



Virginia says she and her family gained weight because:

- “Our family tends to eat on the go, and we don’t always have time or energy to make healthy meals.”
- “Our family time is often spent sitting, watching a show, or helping the kids with homework.”
- “I don’t take enough breaks during the day to move around or even go for a walk.”
- “I shop on a budget, and sometimes the healthier foods just seem too expensive.”

NOTE

Does Virginia’s family sound like yours? If so, it’s time to make some healthy changes.

Do You Know If You Need to Lose Weight?

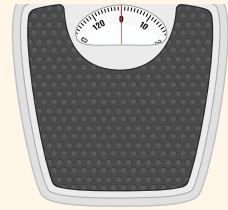
Your body mass index (BMI) and waist measurement can show you if you’re at a healthy weight. In the BMI chart on the next page, find where your height and weight intersect. That column header will indicate if you’re at a healthy weight, overweight, obese, or extremely obese.

Body Mass Index (BMI) Chart

	Healthy Weight	Overweight	Obese	Extreme Obesity
BMI	19–24	25–29	30–39	40–54
Height	Body Weight (pounds)			
4' 10"	91–155	119–138	143–186	191–258
4' 11"	94–119	124–143	148–198	198–267
5' 0"	97–123	128–148	153–199	204–276
5' 1"	100–127	132–153	158–206	211–285
5' 2"	104–131	136–158	164–213	218–295
5' 3"	107–135	141–163	169–220	225–304
5' 4"	110–140	145–169	174–227	232–314
5' 5"	114–144	150–174	180–234	240–324
5' 6"	118–148	155–179	186–241	247–334
5' 7"	121–153	159–185	191–249	255–344
5' 8"	125–158	164–190	197–256	262–354
5' 9"	128–162	169–196	203–263	270–365
5' 10"	132–167	174–202	209–271	278–376
5' 11"	136–172	179–208	215–279	286–386
6' 0"	140–177	184–213	221–287	294–397
6' 1"	144–182	189–219	227–295	302–408
6' 2"	148–186	194–225	233–303	311–420
6' 3"	152–192	200–232	240–311	319–431
6' 4"	156–197	205–238	246–320	328–443

Guide to a Healthy Weight

You can find out if you're at a healthy weight or not by looking at your height and weight on the BMI chart. You have a healthy weight if your BMI is 19–24.



- You're underweight if your BMI is less than 19.
- You're overweight if your BMI is 25–29.
- You're obese if your BMI is 30–39.
- You're extremely obese if your BMI is 40 or higher.

My weight is:

- Underweight:** I will ask my doctor if I need to do anything.
- Healthy:** I will try to maintain my current weight.
- Overweight:** I will take action to lose weight.
- Obese or extremely obese:** I will ask my doctor or a registered dietitian for help to lose weight.

NOTE



BMI shows if your weight is in the healthy range for your height, but doesn't take muscle mass, bone density, or body composition into account. Talk with your doctor about whether your BMI is too high or low for you and what it means for your heart health.

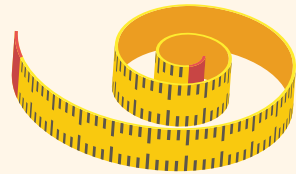
Measure Your Waist

Measure your waist by placing a measuring tape snugly around your waist, just above your hip bone. Exhale, and then read the tape measure.

Write down your waist measurement:

Your measurement is high if:

- Women—it's greater than 35 inches
- Men—it's greater than 40 inches



My waist measurement is:

- Healthy
- High

A high waist measurement increases your risk for heart disease.

If your waist measurement is high, take steps to lose weight.

Promise to Commit to Healthy Weight Loss

A 5 percent to 10 percent weight loss can significantly improve your health and quality of life.

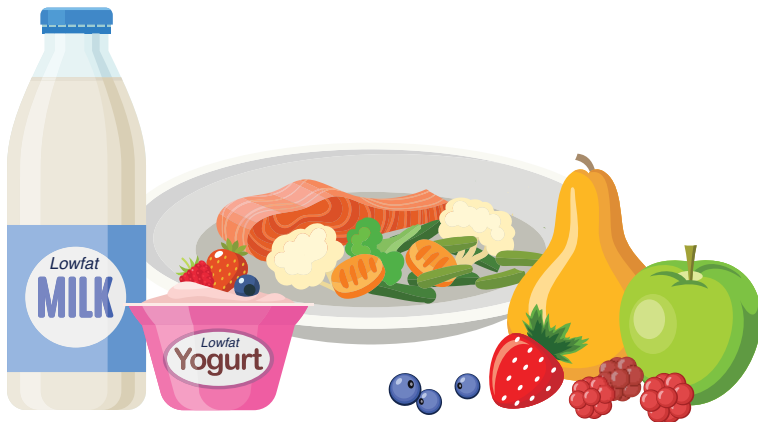
Lose weight slowly, about 1 to 2 pounds a week. Start by making a commitment to yourself. Write and sign a letter to yourself that promises steps for weight loss:

- The amount of weight you want to lose.
- The date by which you'd like to lose weight.
- The changes you'll make.
- Your plan for getting regular physical activity.

Follow These Steps to Eat Healthier

Step 1. Choose and Prepare Foods in a Heart-Healthy Way

- Choose fat-free milk or low-fat (1%) milk and cheese.
- Eat fruits and vegetables without butter or sauce.
- Use fat-free or low-fat salad dressing or mayonnaise.
- Drink water, sparkling water, or unsweetened tea.
- If you drink fruit juice, make sure it's a small portion of 100 percent fruit juice. Juice is high in calories and sugar.
- Try to eat fruit more often than you drink juice. Fruit has more fiber.
- Eat lean cuts of meat and fish.*
- Eat low-fat or light ice cream and yogurt.
- Bake, broil, roast, or grill foods instead of frying.
- Cook without meat fat or lard.



*Pregnant and nursing mothers: Talk to your healthcare provider to find out the types of fish you can eat that are lower in mercury. Mercury may be harmful to your baby.

Step 2. Read the Nutrition Facts Labels

Choose foods lower in calories and sugar.

Compare the Nutrition Facts labels for sweetened tea and unsweetened tea:

Which would you choose?

Sweetened Tea

Nutrition Facts	
1 servings per container	
Serving size	1 can (12 fl. oz) (372g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	120
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 10mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 30g	11%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Total Sugars 28g	
Includes 28g Added Sugars	56%
Protein 0g	0%
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 0mg	0%
Iron 0mg	0%
Potassium 126mg	2%

Unsweetened Tea

Nutrition Facts	
1 servings per container	
Serving size	1 can (12 fl. oz) (360g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	0
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 10mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 1g	0%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Total Sugars 0g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 0g	0%
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 0mg	0%
Iron 0mg	0%
Potassium 133mg	2%

Sweetened tea has 120 calories and 28g of sugar.

The unsweetened tea has no calories and no sugar.

Step 3. Limit Your Portion Size

- Have more salad or other vegetables if you're still hungry.
- To control your hunger, eat smaller meals or healthy snacks during the day instead of one big meal.
- When eating out:
 - Watch your portion sizes. Many restaurant portions are very large.
 - Share a main dish.
 - Order two small orders, such as a half sandwich and salad, instead of a large entree.
 - Divide your main dish in half as soon as you get it. Ask your server to wrap the other half “to go.”

Step 4. Say “Yes” to Physical Activity

Physical activity helps you improve your heart health, reduce stress, and feel better. Make it your answer to feeling tired, bored, and out of shape.



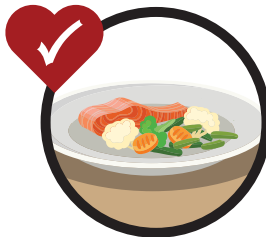
Virginia

I have a big family, and we get together often. Now, I bring healthier food to the gatherings. I encourage everyone to think of fun things to do to be active when we get together. I want my family to follow a healthy path.



Stay Healthy at Family Gatherings

- Don't go to family gatherings hungry. Eat a heart-healthy snack before you leave home.
- Bring a heart-healthy dish to share. Prepare or pick up a tasty dish with lots of vegetables.
- Cut down on calories and high-fat foods. Eat more vegetables and fruits instead of fried foods.
- Watch your portions. Go for small portions and eat slowly.
- Take the focus off food. Dance, jump rope, or play a sport, such as soccer or baseball. Plan activities for the kids like hide-and-seek or tag, or get everyone out for a family walk.



Check Three Things You Will Do to Help You Lose Weight

- Get up 15 minutes earlier to eat breakfast at home. Include fruit, whole grains, and a fat-free or low-fat protein.
- Prepare a heart-healthy lunch the night before. Include fruits, vegetables, and small portions of leftovers.
- Take a piece of fruit for a snack at work.
- Eat smaller portions at dinner. Eat vegetables every night, or have a healthy salad with low-calorie dressing.
- Drink water or unsweetened tea instead of soda or other drinks high in calories and sugar.
- Especially if you don't have a physically demanding job, move more at work, at home, and in your spare time. Walk with your family or a friend.

Find Help

- Ask for help from a healthcare provider and registered dietitian if you need to lose weight.
- Find out if your community has heart-health classes taught by community health workers. If so, join the classes.

NOTE



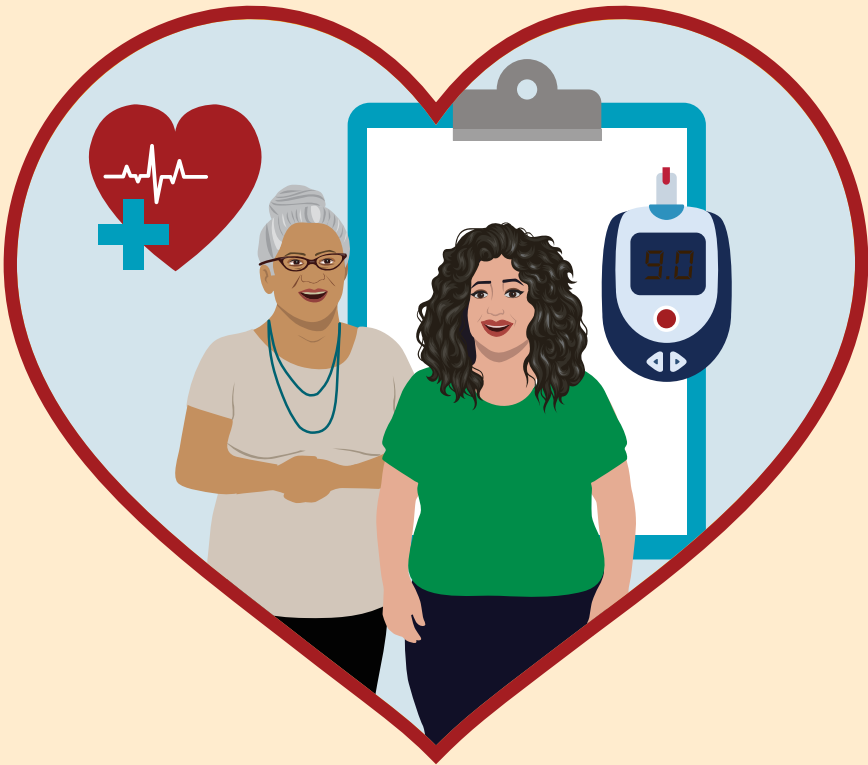
Pass on the Promise

When you maintain a healthy weight, you're setting an example of heart-healthy living for your children and the youth in your community. Pass on the promise of healthy living and long life to future generations.

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SECTION 7

Protect Your Heart From Diabetes



Section 7



Protect Your Heart From Diabetes

Preventing or controlling diabetes can lower your risk of heart disease and other health problems. Did you know that by making lifestyle changes, you can do a lot to protect yourself from diabetes? This section will teach you about diabetes and how to lower your risk.

Carmen

Diabetes runs in my family. My brother and I have type 2 diabetes. I need to know more about it.



What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes is when the body doesn't make enough insulin or can't use it well. This causes high levels of sugar, also called glucose, to build up in your blood. Diabetes is a serious disease.

Types of Diabetes

There are three main types of diabetes: type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes. Type 1 diabetes happens when the body stops making insulin. Type 2 diabetes occurs when some insulin is made, but the body can't use it well. Type 2 diabetes is much more common. Gestational diabetes occurs only when women are pregnant.

Prediabetes is when blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be diabetes. People with prediabetes are likely to develop diabetes but can take steps to help prevent it.

Why Is Diabetes Dangerous?

Diabetes is a major risk factor for heart attack and stroke. It can also cause blindness, amputation, nerve damage, and kidney problems. Over time, high blood sugar damages the body.

Do You Have Symptoms of Diabetes?

If you have any of the following symptoms, tell a healthcare provider right away. They may want to test your blood sugar:

- Having to pee a lot, often at night
- Feeling very thirsty
- Losing weight without trying
- Feeling very hungry
- Having blurry vision
- Feeling numbness or tingling in your hands or feet
- Having dry skin
- Feeling very tired
- Having sores that heal slowly
- Having more infections than usual

Are You at Risk for Diabetes?

Some people with type 2 diabetes may have no symptoms. That's why it's important to know your risk factors and get your blood sugar tested.

You're more likely to get type 2 diabetes if you:

- Are overweight, especially if you have extra weight around your waist.
- Have a parent or sibling with diabetes.
- Are African American, Hispanic/Latino American, Alaska Native, American Indian, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander.
- Had diabetes while pregnant, which is called gestational diabetes.
- Gave birth to a baby weighing 9 pounds or more.
- Have high blood pressure.
- Aren't regularly physically active.
- Have depression.
- Have polycystic ovary syndrome, also called PCOS.
- Have acanthosis nigricans, which is a condition that causes dark, thick, velvety skin around your neck or armpits.

Carmen

The doctor told my daughter, Virginia, that she has prediabetes. Her fasting blood sugar was 120 mg/dL, and she was also overweight. We worked together to change our habits. I didn't want her to develop diabetes like me.



Have Your Blood Sugar Checked

Your healthcare provider can test your fasting blood sugar.

- Virginia’s sugar level is 120 mg/dL. She has prediabetes.
- Carmen’s sugar level is 130 mg/dL. She has diabetes.

Prediabetes means you’re on the way to developing diabetes. Act now—lose weight if needed, and be more active.

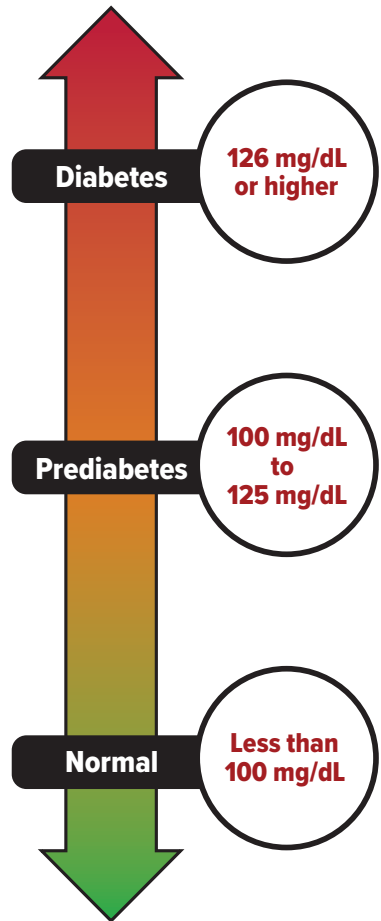
Plan Healthy Meals and Snacks

To prevent or control diabetes, you need to limit the amount of sugar and carbohydrates you eat. Eating too much sugar can cause high blood sugar levels and weight gain.

Carbohydrates are in foods such as baked goods, rice, cereal, potatoes, pasta, and sweet beverages. Carbohydrates turn into sugar in your body, so they affect your blood sugar level more than other foods do.

Foods you wouldn’t expect, especially foods served at restaurants, can have a lot of sugar. For example, a serving of “fruit and maple oatmeal” at a fast-food restaurant has almost as much sugar as a can of soda. So does 4 tablespoons of barbeque sauce.

You don’t have to give up a favorite food to eat healthy meals and snacks. When a food you like is high in carbohydrates, sweeteners, sodium, or fat, have smaller portions. Also, balance it with healthier foods at other times of the day.



Virginia's Promise to Stop Her Prediabetes

To make sure her prediabetes doesn't become diabetes, Virginia is eating healthier foods and losing weight. She spends about 2 hours and 30 minutes a week being active, either walking or taking a dance class. Her doctor told her that moving more will help improve how her body uses insulin.

The ABCs of Diabetes Control

If you have diabetes, here are some ways to control it:

- **A is for the A1C test.** This test measures how your blood sugar has been for the last 3 months. It lets you know if your level has been under control. Get this test done at least twice a year.
- **B is for blood pressure.** The higher your blood pressure, the harder your heart has to work. Get your blood pressure checked at each healthcare visit, and ask your provider if you should monitor it at home.
- **C is for cholesterol.** “Bad” cholesterol, or LDL, builds up and clogs your arteries. Get your LDL cholesterol tested at least once a year.
- **S is for stop smoking.** Not smoking is especially important for people with diabetes. Smoking and diabetes narrow your blood vessels, which stresses your heart. There's no “safe” level of smoking.

If you have diabetes, be sure to ask your healthcare provider:

- What are my A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol numbers?
- If the numbers are not normal, what should I do to lower my numbers?
- How can I find a local diabetes program for education and support?

Carmen

I am taking steps now to control my diabetes. I check my glucose levels daily. I also walk every day for 40 minutes, and I eat smaller portions. I have lost 8 pounds.



Carmen's Promise to Take Care of Her Health

- Checks her blood sugar level as often as her healthcare provider recommended.
- Takes the medicines her healthcare provider prescribed, even when she feels fine.
- Washes and checks her feet every day for cuts, bruises, red areas, or swelling. An infection in her feet could become very serious.
- Sees her eye doctor at least once a year.

NOTE



It's important to work with a healthcare provider, certified diabetes educator, or registered dietitian to help you control your diabetes. Learn how to take care of your ABCs and empower yourself.

Take Action: Check the Steps You'll Promise to Prevent or Control Diabetes

- Find out if I have diabetes.
- Get my blood sugar level checked.
- Get my blood pressure checked.
- If I have diabetes, get my A1C checked as often as my healthcare provider recommends.
- Lose weight if I am overweight. A 5 percent to 10 percent weight loss will improve my health and quality of life.
- Be physically active for 2 hours and 30 minutes a week.
- Eat foods lower in carbohydrates and calories.
- Take the “My Heart Health Card” (on page 76) to my next medical appointment. Be sure to have it filled out.

SECTION 8

Take Control of Your Health: Enjoy Living Tobacco Free



Section 8



Take Control of Your Health: Enjoy Living Tobacco Free

If you smoke, quitting will be one of the most important steps you take to improve your health. This section has suggestions on how to quit smoking.

How Does Smoking Affect Your Health?

Smoking causes many health problems, such as:

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Cancer
- Lung disease

How Does Smoking Affect the Health of Your Loved Ones?

Babies who live with smokers are more likely to get:

- Colds
- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- Pneumonia
- Ear infections

Family members exposed to cigarette smoke may develop:

- Heart and lung problems
- Stroke
- Cancer

Smoking during pregnancy increases the chances that your baby will be born sick.

Mariano

I knew that smoking was bad for my health, but I didn't want to quit. My father smoked cigarettes every day. When he died of a heart attack, I decided that I needed to stop. His death motivated me to quit smoking.



Why Quit Smoking?

Improve Your Family's Well-Being

- Enjoy a longer and healthier life with your family and friends.
- Breathe easier.
- Have more energy.
- Save the money now used to buy cigarettes.
- Set a good example for your children and friends.

Look And Smell Better

- Get rid of bad breath.
- Have fresh-smelling clothes and hair.
- Lose yellow stains on teeth and fingers.
- Prevent wrinkles.

What Should You Expect When You Quit?

Nicotine is a powerful drug that causes addiction. Your body gets used to the nicotine in cigarettes. When you stop smoking, your body has to get used to not having nicotine. That can be uncomfortable. Tell your healthcare provider that you're trying to quit smoking. There are medicines that can help you feel better.

How Does It Feel at First?

Some people may feel cranky, sad, or restless. You may have trouble sleeping. The good news is:

- For most people, the worst symptoms last only a few days to a few weeks.
- Quitting smoking isn't easy but, many people are able to quit for good.
- If you smoke again, quit again. It may take many attempts to quit for good.

Mariano

I chose my father's birthday as my quit date. I got help from my family and my friends. A doctor and a health educator also helped me. They gave me great ideas for managing the cravings.



Quit Smoking With These Helpful Tips—Promise to:

Get Ready

- Pick a day to quit smoking.
- Write down the reasons for quitting and your triggers. Put the list where you'll see it every day.
- Throw away all cigarettes, lighters, and ashtrays. Don't buy any more cigarettes.
- Tell your family, friends, and coworkers the day you're quitting.
- Make a list of the persons who will support you.

Make a Plan to Stay Off Cigarettes

- Don't go to places that make you want to smoke.
- At parties, don't be around friends who smoke.
- When someone offers you a cigarette, say, "No, thank you. I don't smoke."

Ask for Help

- Buy nicotine gum or skin patches, or ask a healthcare provider for a prescription for medicine that will help you quit.
- Check out the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Quitline (in Spanish): 1-855-DEJELO-YA or 1-855-335-3569; and, in English, 1-800-QUIT-NOW or 1-800-784-8669.
- Find a local program to help you quit smoking or go online to [smokefree.gov](https://www.smokefree.gov) for help.

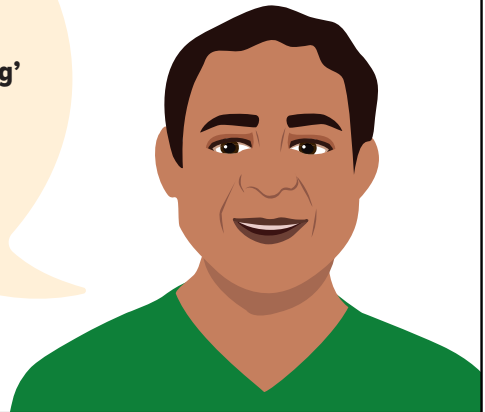
Avoid the Urge To Smoke

Keep Your Hands Busy

- Go somewhere that doesn't allow smoking, such as a coffee shop.
- Keep your hands busy. Play a game on your phone, eat a healthy snack, or squeeze a stress ball. Start a project around the house, do arts and crafts, or garden.
- Keep moving. Go for a walk or do some housecleaning.

Mariano

In the beginning, I was stressed and craved a cigarette. Instead of lighting up, I called the 'Quit Smoking' help line. They suggested I chew sugarless gum and listen to music to help decrease the urge. It worked.



Put Something in Your Mouth That Isn't a Cigarette

- Drink water.
- Chew sugarless gum.
- Eat vegetable sticks or apple slices.
- Chew on a short straw or a toothpick.

Manage Stress, Anger, Nerves, and Exhaustion

- Take a slow, deep breath; count to five; and release it. Repeat 10 times.
- Talk with a friend.
- Take a walk.
- Listen to music.

Start Your Morning on the Right Foot

- Brush your teeth and use mouthwash, instead of smoking.
- If you've always had a cigarette with your coffee, switch to tea for a while or drink water.

Help Your Children Stay Tobacco-Free

- Talk to your children about the harm smoking does to their health.
- Help your children make a sign that says, "We are happy to be a smoke-free family."

Protect Your Family and Friends From Secondhand Smoke

Put a "Thank You for Not Smoking" sticker or sign in your house and car.

Mariano

When friends come to our house and light up, I say politely that our house is smoke-free, and they need to smoke outside.



My Promise to Quit Smoking

Write down the reasons you want to quit smoking.

Here are some examples:

- To improve my health
- To protect my family
- To have more energy
- To save money



Reasons to Quit Smoking

Steps I Promise to Take to Quit Smoking

For example, you might:

Set a quit date.

My quit date is: _____

Ask family and friends to help you. Write down names below:

Find a local program to help you quit smoking.

Make a list of things to do when you get the urge to smoke.

My Heart Health Card

Use this card to record the results of your tests. Take action to keep your heart healthy.

The heart icon (♥) represents the numbers for a person who doesn't have any risk factors for heart disease.

Talk with your healthcare provider about what your numbers should be.

Name: _____

Tests to measure general health

Weight	Date				
	Result				
BMI ♥ 18.5 to 24.9	Date				
	Result				
Waist Measurement ♥ Men: 40 inches or less ♥ Women: 35 inches or less	Date				
	Result				
Blood Pressure ♥ Less than 120/80 mm Hg	Date				
	Result				



Tests to measure fats in blood

Total Cholesterol

♥ Less than 200 mg/dL

Date

Result

LDL

♥ Less than 100 mg/dL

Date

Result

HDL

♥ Men: 40 mg/dL or higher

♥ Women: 50 mg/dL or higher

Date

Result

Triglycerides

♥ Less than 150 mg/dL

Date

Result

Tests to check sugar in blood for diabetes

Blood Glucose (Blood Sugar)

♥ Fasting—less than 100 mg/dL

Date

Result

A1C

♥ 7% or less

Date

Result

Other

Test name

Date

Result



For More Information

For more information on diseases, conditions, and procedures related to heart disease, visit the NHLBI website at www.nhlbi.nih.gov or contact the NHLBI Center for Health Information:

P.O. Box 30105

Bethesda, MD 20824-0105

Phone: 1-877-NHLBI4U (1-877-645-2448)

TRS: 7-1-1

Email: NHLBIinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov

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National Heart, Lung,
and Blood Institute



NIH Publication No. 24-HL-8215
April 2024