

HEART POWER



HEART POWER Through Diet, Exercise, and Risk Reduction

Good and Bad Cholesterol – Cholesterol is an essential part of every cell, but too much cholesterol in the blood has been linked to the artery-clogging formation of plaque. Cholesterol can be either good or bad. Cholesterol is bad when it's bundled in a ball of protein called low-density lipoprotein, or LDL. High-density lipoprotein, HDL—the good cholesterol, removes cholesterol from the artery wall and slows the development of plaque.

Dietary Cholesterol and Saturated Fats – Cholesterol and fat are the main components of plaque, so it makes sense to reduce your intake of foods containing these substances. Cholesterol is *mainly* found in foods of animal origin. Saturated fat is any fat that remains solid at room temperature and is found *primarily* in meat and dairy products. For healthy people, it is best to limit your daily cholesterol intake to 250-300 milligrams and your fat intake to no more than 30% of your total daily calories.

Exercise – Regular exercise, particularly aerobic exercise, can help reduce your risk of heart disease. Aerobic exercise strengthens and conditions the heart muscle itself, helping it to distribute oxygen more efficiently. Regular vigorous exercise also increases the body's level of HDL and is an important aspect of weight control. Since excess weight increases the amount of work the heart must do, maintaining a healthy weight places less stress on the heart.

Reducing Risks – Quitting smoking and controlling blood pressure are two key components of reducing your risk for heart disease. Have your blood pressure checked every 1-2 years (if it is currently normal), and follow your healthcare professional's advice regarding blood pressure control. It's never too early to reduce your risks and start being heart smart.

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ARE YOU AT RISK FOR HEART DISEASE?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the US. According to the American Heart Association, every minute of every hour of every day someone dies from a heart attack. Many of these people had no previous symptoms. Most of these folks are not older adults in their 80's or 90's. There are certain risk factors associated with heart disease. Please check yes or no to the following questions to determine your level of risk for developing heart disease.

- 1 Are you over 50 years of age? YES NO
- 2 Has your doctor ever told you that you have high blood pressure? YES NO
- 3 Do you smoke cigarettes or use tobacco products? YES NO
- 4 Has your doctor ever told you that you have diabetes? YES NO
- 5 Has your doctor ever told you that you have high cholesterol? YES NO
- 6 Is there a history of heart disease in your family? YES NO
- 7 Do you exercise less than 30 minutes three times a week? YES NO
- 8 Do you feel stressed often? YES NO

The more you checked YES the greater your risk for heart disease. Remember you can lower your heart risk by modifying behavior. Cultivate the lifestyle practices that keep your heart healthy, lungs clean, and body strong.