

Wondering what you can do to take charge of your heart health?

Plenty. Making some small changes in your everyday life can help keep your heart strong. Here are 10 tips to get you started.

1. Stop smoking. Smoking can contribute to heart disease, as well as cancer and other serious health conditions. There's no better time than right now to kick the habit.
2. Get moving. Physical activity is good for your heart. Play with the kids, ride your bike, plant some flowers – even something as simple as taking the stairs instead of the elevator can make a difference.
3. Eat your veggies (and fruits). Fruits and vegetables are loaded with the nutrients your heart needs. Get creative – try new vegetables, and make sure to sample fruits and vegetables that are different colors.
4. Choose whole grains. Whole grains are an excellent source of fiber, and they can help lower your cholesterol. They also make you feel full longer.
5. Choose fish. Many fish dishes contain omega-3 fatty acids that can decrease your risk of coronary heart disease.
6. Drink alcohol in moderation. The American Heart Association recommends drinking no more than one alcoholic drink per day for women and two for men.
7. Cut fat, sodium and sugar. Excess sodium in your diet can contribute to high blood pressure, and too much fat and sugar will cause you to pack on the pounds. Choose healthy foods.
8. Lose weight. Extra weight places strain on the heart. Losing weight can also help prevent diabetes and other chronic conditions.
9. Exercise. Cardiovascular exercise is essential for good heart health. Exercise at least 30 minutes a day three times a week.
10. Relax! Research has suggested a link between stress and heart disease. Don't sweat the small stuff. It's better for your peace of mind and your heart health.

To learn more about your risk for heart disease, talk with your physician. If you need help finding a family doctor, please call Wellmont Nurse Connection at 1-877-230-NURSE.