

A close-up photograph of two hands, one from a Black person and one from a white person, joined together to form a heart shape. The background is a blurred crowd of people, with a prominent red color. The text '7 STEPS to a Healthy Heart' is overlaid on the top left in white, with the number '7' being significantly larger than the word 'STEPS'.

7 STEPS to a Healthy Heart

A PATIENT RESOURCE GUIDE

Choices for Better Health

Changing Health Outcomes by Improving
Cardiovascular Education and Screenings

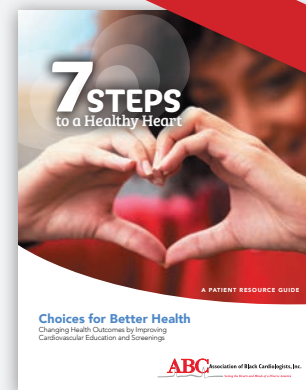


Also available in Spanish!

Online Version Also Available

This self-help workbook is a tool you can use to help manage your heart health and that of your family. Please visit www.abc-patient.com/7Steps for an interactive version of this workbook. The online workbook has these features to help you make the most of what you learn:

- Printable materials
- Instant definitions of terms used in the workbook
- Quizzes and surveys to show what you have learned and what you need to review



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The ABC Mission, Values, & Vision

The Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc., is fully accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME).

Our Mission

To promote the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease, including stroke, in Blacks and other minorities and to achieve health equity for all through the elimination of disparities.

Our Values

We believe that good health is the cornerstone of progress. We are firm in our resolve to make exemplary health care accessible and affordable to all, dedicated to lowering the high rate of cardiovascular disease, including stroke, in minority populations, and committed to advocacy and diversity. We are guided by ethical principles in all transactions and strive for excellence in our training and skills.

Our Vision

ABC adheres to the vision that all people regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender should benefit equally from the reduction in the frequency, duration, and impact of diseases of the heart and blood vessels.

DISCLAIMER: This guidebook is for informational purposes only, with the understanding that no one should rely upon this information as the basis for medical decisions. Anyone requiring medical or other health care services should consult a medical or health care professional. Any actions based on the information provided herein are entirely the responsibility of the user and/or of any medical or other health care professionals who advised such actions. Anyone who uses the suggested dietary and physical activity/exercise areas in this guidebook should consult a medical or health care provider before starting a diet or physical activity/exercise program.

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Introduction



The statistics tell an upsetting tale: African Americans die of heart disease at a 30% higher rate than other Americans. Even worse, heart disease and stroke kill more African Americans than cancer, accidents, pneumonia, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, liver failure, suicide, and homicide combined. Further, factors that lead to the development of heart disease frequently start in childhood.

The good news is that you have control over some risk factors that cause heart disease. This booklet uses guidance created by the Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc. (ABC) to help break the cycle of cardiovascular disparities. The wisdom in these pages will help you build a healthy lifestyle and prevent high blood pressure, diabetes, heart attack, stroke, and other health problems.

Take a few minutes to look through this booklet. It has useful tips that will help you and your family follow the 7 Steps to a Healthy Heart:

1. Access health care services and education.
2. Take charge of your blood pressure.
3. Control your cholesterol.
4. Track your blood sugar.
5. Don't use tobacco.
6. Eat smart and enjoy regular exercise.
7. Be spiritually active and reduce stress.

Discuss your goals with your health care provider and use the charts and worksheets in each chapter to record important information about your health and lifestyle. The back of this booklet contains a list of resources where you can find more information about healthy living.

Your efforts toward living a more active and fulfilling life will inspire others in your family and community. The end goal: Better heart health for you and for the generations that follow. Together, with your help, the help of your health care provider, and this booklet, our families can enjoy a brighter, healthier future.

Now is the time to take the right steps, so let's get started!

STEP 1

Access Health Care Services and Education



While the overall health of the U.S. population is steadily improving, African Americans still have the highest rates of death from heart disease and stroke among all other U.S. racial or ethnic groups. The reasons for these health disparities are complex. But they largely reflect direct and indirect results of discrimination, as well as negative social determinants of health, such as:

- Differences in socioeconomic status
- Environmental poverty
- Food deserts

Common Barriers to Equal Access to Health Care

Lack of health care insurance: Lack of adequate health coverage is harmful to people without insurance, the health care system, and society as a whole. People who are uninsured are more likely to have problems getting care. Many don't get primary and preventive care that may help them avoid a serious health crisis.

Geographic: Transportation is often a problem in cities and rural areas, creating obstacles to health care services, especially preventive care, until emergencies arise.

Language and culture: Good communication can be hard if the patient and the health care provider have different cultures and speak different languages.

Low health literacy: Complex medical terms can be intimidating. People with poor health literacy may have trouble communicating with their health care providers, reading instructions on prescription drugs, and filling out medical and insurance forms.

Low socioeconomic status: African Americans are one of the poorest ethnic groups in the United States. Poverty is a prime predictor for lacking basic human essentials, including adequate clean water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing, and shelter. Poverty is connected with poor health outcomes and higher rates of death and disease. Heart disease, diabetes, obesity, higher blood lead levels, and low birth weight are all more widespread among poor people.

How to Better Understand Your Care

To grow your health literacy and help you understand what questions to ask your provider, try these tips:

- Take the time to read educational brochures that you pick up.
- Become an active partner with your doctor and ask questions until you get the answers you need and understand.

Remember, the more you know about your own health issues, the better equipped you will be to help manage them.

The Provider-Patient Relationship

Being healthy at age 40 does not mean that your health will be the same at age 50. Make sure to check in with a health care provider every year. Children may require more frequent visits. Ask your health care provider for a recommended schedule for you and your family. Remember: When problems are found early, you usually have more choices for treatment.

Don't let fear or denial keep you from getting care.

If you don't have a provider you see regularly, find one with whom you feel comfortable. Think of it as a partnership: You and your provider are working on a project together, and the project is your health.

Before each visit, write down your questions and take the list to your appointment. Then, make sure you get answers to all your questions. It may be helpful to bring a relative or a friend along.

If there isn't time to get all the answers you need, talk with your provider about this. If they aren't responsive, it may be time to find someone else.

Getting Health Care at Clinics

Take advantage of any health care benefits from your employer. If none are offered, public clinics are available. Don't be discouraged if you face long wait times. When you overcome these barriers, you help ensure better health for you and your family.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Since President Barack Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act into law in 2010, health outcomes have improved for African Americans. Changes that the law brought include:

- Insurance companies are required to offer the same level of care without regard to gender or preexisting conditions (i.e., health problems you had before you got the insurance policy).
- Insurance companies must offer minimum standards of coverage and cannot put caps on annual and lifetime benefits.
- Individuals and businesses can buy health insurance through state exchanges, where health insurers compete for your business. Many low-income individuals and families who buy insurance through the exchanges are eligible for financial assistance (on a sliding scale) to help them cover the cost.
- Medicaid has expanded coverage in many states.

The main goal of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is to help more people get the health insurance and health care they need, without adding to the costs they bear. For more information, visit www.healthcare.gov.



Stay Up-to-Date on Current Treatments

One way to improve your health care options is to stay up-to-date on current treatments. By doing so, you may be able to take advantage of a better treatment option for your condition.

AFib

If it's not treated, **atrial fibrillation** (often called AFib) is a potentially dangerous health problem in which the heart's rhythm is too fast or otherwise not normal. This irregular heart rate commonly causes poor blood flow. People with AFib may have no symptoms at all, or they may experience:

- Fatigue or weakness
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Palpitations (a sense of racing or uncomfortable "flopping" of the heart)
- Lightheadedness
- Confusion
- Chest pain

Anticoagulants

The risk for blood clots is high in people with AFib, so drugs called anticoagulants and antiplatelets are often prescribed to prevent the possibility of a stroke.

If you need to take an anticoagulant drug, talk with your provider about which one is right for you.

Aspirin

If you have a high risk for heart disease, your health care provider may suggest using low-dose **aspirin** to reduce your risk for heart attack and stroke. But before you start taking it, be sure you understand the risks and benefits.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) stresses that for adults ages 40 to 59, the decision to use aspirin should be an individual one. And for those ages 60 and older who have never had a heart attack or stroke, the USPSTF recommends against taking aspirin.

Stroke

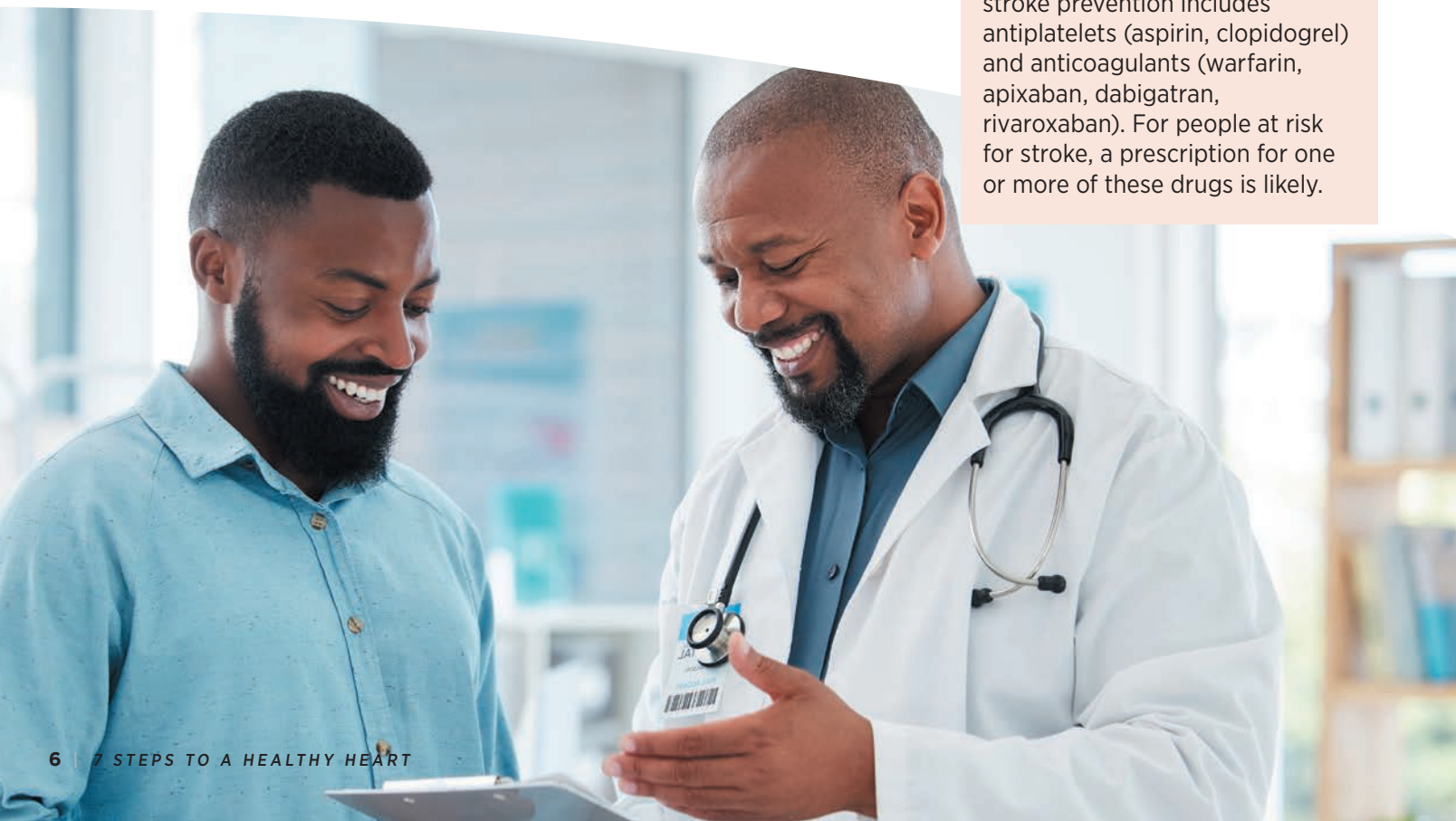
A **stroke**, or "brain attack," can happen to anyone at any age. Although rare, strokes can also happen in children. Children with congenital heart disease, sickle cell, clotting disorders, injury, or infection are particularly at risk. Stroke is always an emergency, so if you suspect you or someone you are with is having a stroke, call **911** immediately. Every minute counts in stroke treatment.

The symptoms of stroke include sudden:

- Numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Confusion; trouble talking or understanding speech
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination
- Severe headache with no known cause

Children may present with the above signs and symptoms and/or seizures.

The standard treatment for stroke prevention includes antiplatelets (aspirin, clopidogrel) and anticoagulants (warfarin, apixaban, dabigatran, rivaroxaban). For people at risk for stroke, a prescription for one or more of these drugs is likely.



Angina

Angina is pain or pressure you feel in your chest when your heart muscle does not get enough blood. It can feel like tightness or squeezing in the chest area. Some angina patients say that it feels like a weight has been placed on their chest.

Angina can be a sign of **coronary heart disease**, which happens when buildup of plaque in the coronary arteries blocks the blood flow to the heart. Coronary heart disease is the most common type of **cardiovascular disease**.

There are three types of angina:

- 1. Stable:** This type occurs most often when you exert yourself. It goes away with rest or the use of angina drugs.
- 2. Unstable:** This unpredictable, more severe type does not go away with rest. It can be the sign of an impending heart attack.

3. Variant: Only about 2% of people with angina have this type. Variant angina usually happens when you're resting and is severe but often goes away with the use of an angina drug.

Symptoms of Angina

Signs can include:

- Chest pain or discomfort (for women, it may feel more like a sharp or stabbing pain in the chest)
- Pain in your arms, neck, jaw, shoulder, or back along with chest pain
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Anxiety
- Sweating
- Dizziness

Talking with Your Provider About Angina

If angina is getting in the way of your daily routine, talk with your provider about treatments. Medications can help with the symptoms of angina, as well as the underlying problems.

When you talk with your cardiologist, be sure to tell them:

- When your symptoms happen
- What you are doing when they happen
- How your symptoms feel to you
- How often they occur (frequency)
- How long your symptoms last (duration)
- Whether your symptoms are getting worse over time

Heart Attacks

When blood flow to the heart is blocked in a coronary artery, a **heart attack** often happens. It can be fatal.

If you have symptoms of a heart attack, call **911** immediately. Signs include:

- A feeling of fullness or pressure in the middle of your chest that lasts more than a few minutes
- Chest pain that extends to your shoulder, arm, back, or mouth
- Frequent periods of chest pain
- Upper abdomen pain
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating and fainting
- Nausea and vomiting

Women may have different symptoms, which can include:

- Heartburn or abdominal pain
- Clammy skin
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Unusual or unexplained fatigue

Symptoms can vary widely. Some people have no symptoms at all. Just remember: to act at once if you have symptoms.

Medicines for Heart Attacks

A heart attack patient will often be given prescription drugs to help break up the blockage that is causing the heart attack. These drugs can include:

- Aspirin to reduce blood clotting
- Antiplatelet drugs
- Clot-busting drugs, which are used in rare situations
- Other blood-thinning drugs
- Pain relievers
- Medications for chest pain and to improve blood flow to your heart
- Beta blockers, which relax your heart and lower blood pressure
- Cholesterol-lowering drugs

- Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs), or angiotensin receptor-neprilysin inhibitors (ARNIs) are used to lower blood pressure and to protect kidney function, especially in people who have diabetes and high blood pressure or a weakened heart


Other Treatments

Sometimes doctors will perform an emergency angioplasty to open blocked coronary arteries. This involves inserting a long, thin tube called a catheter through an artery (usually in your arm or groin) to where the artery is blocked.

Once in place, a balloon on the catheter is briefly inflated to open up the blocked artery, and sometimes a metal mesh stent is inserted into the artery to keep it open.

STEP 2

Take Charge of Your Blood Pressure



As your heart pumps blood to all parts of your body, it creates a force in your arteries and other blood vessels. This is called blood pressure. If the force is too strong or if your blood vessels are constricted, you have high blood pressure.

High blood pressure—also called **hypertension**—is known as the silent killer. Many people with high blood pressure feel healthy and may not know they have it. But if it's left untreated, high blood pressure can cause a heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness, heart failure, or even death.

Easy, Painless Screening

Once you know you have high blood pressure, you can take steps to control it. Start by learning your blood pressure numbers. Screening is easy, painless, and takes only a minute or two. Even if you are young and feel healthy, have a provider check your blood pressure at least once a year. Children should get a blood pressure check starting at age 3. If it's elevated, they should be evaluated by a health care provider, as high blood pressure in children can indicate other health problems. There is no such thing as a “standard” cuff to fit a “standard” arm, so the blood pressure kiosks at drug stores, pharmacies, or grocery stores may not be accurate.

Why Screening Is Important for African Americans

About two out of five African American adults have high blood pressure, and less than half of them have it under control. One in 10 youth has elevated blood pressure. African Americans also tend to develop high blood pressure at a younger age than other groups, and it tends to be more severe.

In most patients, high blood pressure is found only when they have their blood pressure checked. One of the most important things you can do for your health is to get your blood pressure checked regularly.

Checking Blood Pressure at Home

If you already have high blood pressure, you should get it checked more often. Consider buying an inexpensive automatic blood pressure machine that lets you measure your blood pressure daily at home. Once you've bought your monitor, bring it to your next appointment so your provider can verify its accuracy.

Have your provider check to see that you are using it correctly and getting the same results as the equipment used in the office. Plan to bring your monitor in once a year to make sure the readings are accurate.

Measuring Blood Pressure

Your blood pressure measurement includes two numbers, such as 120/80 mmHg.

- The top, or higher, number is the amount of pressure while your heart is pumping blood. This is called the systolic pressure.
- The bottom, or lower number, is the amount of pressure when your heart rests between beats. This is the diastolic pressure.

A normal blood pressure for an adult is lower than 120/80 mmHg. Even if just the top number starts to creep up, it may increase your risk for health problems.



Remember: You can look and feel fine but still have high blood pressure. Don't wait until the damage starts before you find out you're at risk. Simply get your blood pressure checked each year. Even children should have their blood pressure checked every year as part of a preventive health exam.

Controlling Blood Pressure

Use the checklist below to record what you are doing to help keep your blood pressure under control.

	YES	NO
I get my blood pressure checked at least once a year.		
If my blood pressure tends to be higher than 120/80 mmHg, I get it measured more than once a year, and I talk with my health care provider about ways to control it.		
I exercise regularly.		
I eat foods that are low in fat and sodium.		
I eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.		
I am keeping a healthy weight.		
I do not smoke.		
I limit how much alcohol I drink.		
I have strategies for coping with emotional problems.		
I take medication my provider prescribed for me as directed.		

How to Use a Home Blood Pressure Monitor

BE STILL. Don't smoke, drink caffeinated beverages, or exercise within 30 minutes before checking your blood pressure.

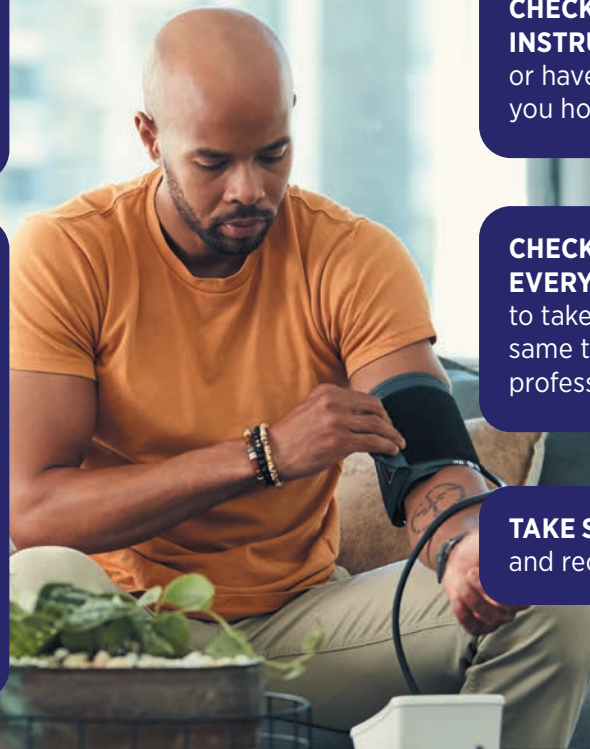
SIT CORRECTLY.

- Sit with your back straight and supported (on a dining chair, rather than a sofa).
- Keep your feet flat on the floor and don't cross your legs.
- Use a flat surface (such as a table) to support your arm, with the upper arm at heart level.
- Make sure the middle of the cuff is placed directly above the middle of the elbow.

CHECK YOUR MONITOR'S INSTRUCTIONS for a picture or have your provider show you how.

CHECK AT THE SAME TIME EVERY DAY. It's important to take the readings at the same time as your health care professional recommends.

TAKE SEVERAL READINGS and record the results.



Each time you measure, take two or three readings one minute apart and record the results on an app or using a printable tracker (see one on page 11). If your monitor has built-in memory to store your readings, take it with you to your appointments. Some monitors may also allow you to upload your readings to a secure website after you register your profile.

Blood Pressure Categories (for ages 13 and older)

Blood pressure in children younger than age 13 varies based on age, sex, and height. Their health care provider can verify the results.

CATEGORY	UPPER NUMBER	AND/OR	LOWER NUMBER
Normal	Less than 120	and	Less than 80
Elevated	120-129	and	Less than 80
Hypertension, Stage 1	130-139	or	80-89
Hypertension, Stage 2	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (contact your provider immediately)	180 or higher	and/or	120 or higher

Source: American Heart Association

Note: A diagnosis of high blood pressure must be confirmed with a medical professional. A provider should also evaluate any unusually low blood pressure readings. Additionally, lower targets may be appropriate for some populations, such as African Americans, the elderly, and patients who have underlying issues, like heart disease, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease.

My Blood Pressure Record

Each time you have your blood pressure checked, record your results here:

DATE	BLOOD PRESSURE READING	CATEGORY		
		Normal	Elevated	High



STEP 3

Control Your Cholesterol

Do you know your cholesterol levels? Just like with blood pressure, monitoring your cholesterol is very important. Here's why:

- **High cholesterol can lead to coronary heart disease, which is the leading cause of death among African Americans.**
- **High cholesterol can result in stroke and peripheral artery disease (PAD), which are leading causes of disability.**

What Is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that your body makes and stores in the liver. It's in the cells of your brain, muscles, skin, and heart, and it's everywhere else your blood flows. Your body needs cholesterol to function normally, but you only need a small amount in your bloodstream.

What Is Coronary Heart Disease?

If you have too much cholesterol, your body stores the extra in your arteries—including the coronary (heart) arteries. Your blood carries oxygen and nutrients to your heart through these muscular tubes. Excess cholesterol can end up clogging your coronary arteries, which causes **coronary heart disease**. So, the higher your cholesterol levels, the greater your risk for heart disease. Rarely, coronary arteries may become clogged by cholesterol in childhood. Therefore, it's important to have your child's cholesterol checked by age 11.

If you have coronary heart disease, you may feel chest pain called angina. It's a sign that not enough blood is reaching your heart. A heart attack happens when the blood supply to part of your heart is completely blocked.

What Is Atherosclerosis?

When there's too much cholesterol in the bloodstream, it can start to build up on the inside walls of the arteries and other blood vessels. This buildup is called plaque. In time, the arteries can start to harden with the built-up plaque. This process is called **atherosclerosis**, or hardening of the arteries. Coronary heart disease, stroke, and **peripheral artery disease** (PAD) all stem from atherosclerosis.

Atherosclerosis is a serious condition that can cause life-threatening problems. This is why it's so important to control your cholesterol and take other steps to help your blood vessels stay healthy. Controlling atherosclerosis is much the same as controlling cholesterol. You want to be physically active, eat nutritious foods, avoid overindulging in alcohol, and quit smoking (or never start).

What Is Cholesterol's Tie to Stroke and PAD?

High cholesterol can also lead to a stroke, which happens when a blood vessel in the brain gets clogged or ruptures. This is called a “brain attack.” Other risks from coronary heart disease include PAD, a blockage or narrowing of the peripheral arteries that carry blood from the heart to other parts of the body. It frequently leads to poor circulation in the legs. Without treatment, PAD can cause a lot of health problems.

Good and Bad Cholesterol

There are two main types of cholesterol:

1. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol. This is known as the “good” cholesterol because it helps remove fat and “bad” cholesterol from the arteries. Having a high HDL level lowers the risk for heart attack, stroke, and PAD, while having a low level of HDL increases your risk. Exercise can help raise your HDL.

2. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. This is often called “bad” cholesterol because it contributes to fatty buildups in the arteries that feed your heart and brain. Too much of it puts you at risk for heart disease and stroke. Eating foods that are high in **saturated fat**—such as high-fat meats and full-fat dairy—can raise your LDL cholesterol level. Trans fats found in margarine, lard, and shortening may also raise your LDL.



Measuring Cholesterol

Your health care provider can do a lipid blood test to measure your total cholesterol, HDL, and LDL levels. Children should have their first lipid test between ages 9 and 11 and again between ages 17 and 21. Adults should have this test repeated at least every five years. Anyone with high cholesterol, diabetes, or certain other conditions should test more often. Children may require screening before age 9 if there is a family history of high cholesterol or early heart disease or stroke (in women, age 65 or earlier; in men, age 55 or earlier). Talk with your health care provider about the lipid test schedule that's right for you.



If your total cholesterol or LDL levels are too high, or if your HDL level is too low, your doctor may prescribe one or more drugs to help bring your cholesterol to a healthier level.

Controlling Cholesterol

Some of the factors that determine cholesterol levels are beyond our control. But there is a lot we can do to influence it. At any age, a healthy lifestyle is very important for managing your cholesterol.

See whether the statements below apply to what you are doing in your daily life. Aim to check every box.

- I read food labels and stay away from foods that are high in saturated fat.
- I limit trans fats, which are often used in fried foods and baked goods.
- I try not to eat foods that are high in dietary cholesterol.
- I exercise at least five days a week.
- I am at a healthy weight, or I am working on reaching a healthy weight.
- I avoid drinking too much alcohol. (No more than two drinks per day for men; no more than one drink per day for women.)

Cholesterol Tests: What the Numbers Mean

LDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)	
< 100	Optimal
100-129	Near optimal/above optimal
130-159	Borderline high
160-189	High
> 190	Very high
Total Cholesterol (mg/dL)	
< 200	Desirable
200-239	Borderline high
> 240	High
HDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)	
> 60	High (aim for high HDL)
< 40	Low

Cholesterol Levels in Children

LDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)	
< 110	Acceptable
110-129	Borderline
≥ 130	High
Total Cholesterol (mg/dL)	
< 170	Acceptable
170-199	Borderline
≥ 200	High
HDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)	
> 45	Acceptable
40-45	Borderline
< 40	Low

Checking Triglycerides

The **lipid panel** that measures your cholesterol levels will also measure your triglycerides. **Triglycerides** are fatty substances that your liver makes from the food you eat. There's a strong link between high triglyceride levels and the risk for heart disease.

Triglyceride Levels (mg/dL), birth to age 9	
< 75	Acceptable
75-99	Borderline
≥ 100	High
Triglyceride Levels (mg/dL), ages 10-19	
< 90	Acceptable
90-129	Borderline
≥ 130	High
Triglyceride Levels (mg/dL), older than age 19	
Less than 150	Normal
150-199	Borderline risk
200-499	High risk
More than 500	Very high risk

When High Cholesterol Is a Family Affair

Most of the time, high cholesterol comes from unhealthy eating habits—consuming too much cholesterol and saturated fat and too few fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. But more than half a million Americans have a more dangerous type called **familial hypercholesterolemia (FH)**. It is an inherited error in the genes that can severely raise the level of harmful LDL cholesterol. This often-undetected condition can cause an early heart attack, stroke, or premature death.

Facts About FH

- Current studies suggest that one in 250 people has been diagnosed with FH in the United States.
- Blood vessel damage from FH can begin as early as 8 years of age.
- Signs of the disease include very high LDL and possibly cholesterol deposits in the tendons or skin.
- Only about 10 to 20% of people with FH know they have it.
- Unless it's treated, 85% of men and 50% of women with FH will have a heart attack, stroke, or cardiac arrest before age 65.
- A parent with FH has a 50% chance of passing it on to their child.

Detecting FH

Many people with FH don't know they have it. Instead, they (and their providers) often think they just have tough-to-treat high cholesterol. Your doctor might want to check you for FH with a blood test if you have one or more of the following:

- Total cholesterol above 300 mg/dL (250 mg/dL in children)
- LDL above 200 mg/dL (150 mg/dL in children)
- Early heart disease or very high cholesterol in your immediate family (a father or brother under age 55, a mother or sister under age 65)
- Cholesterol deposits in the Achilles or other tendons

Treating FH

Controlling cholesterol is the main way to cope with FH. Treatment starts with diet, exercise, and other lifestyle changes, and almost always includes cholesterol-lowering medications.

- **Diet:** Cut back on red meat and full-fat dairy products. Eat more fish, whole grains, vegetables, vegetable oils, beans, and nuts.
- **Exercise:** Stay active to help lower cholesterol levels.
- **Other lifestyle changes:** Quit smoking to protect your heart and blood vessels.
- **Medications:** A cholesterol-lowering medication is the usual starting point for drug therapy. Adding other medicines can cut LDL even further.

The goal: Get your LDL level under 100 mg/dL or see at least a 50% reduction from your starting number.

Alerting Others

If you have FH, your family members should be tested for it, too. Early testing and treatment can delay or prevent serious complications. Encouraging your relatives to get tested may save their lives and well-being.

To learn more about FH, visit www.cdc.gov/genomics/disease/fh/FH.htm.



My Lipid Profile Levels

Each time you have your lipid profile checked, record the results below. Bring this chart to your next health care exam and talk about the results with your doctor.

If your triglyceride levels are above 150 mg/dL, ask your provider about ways to control them. In general, you need to do the same things you would do to lower cholesterol—stick to a healthy, low-fat diet and get plenty of exercise. Plus, you should limit added sugars and other carbohydrates in your diet. And if you smoke, set a quit date and get the support you need to kick the habit (see more tips on pages 21 to 23). Even with these lifestyle changes, your health care provider might also determine that you need medications to help manage high triglyceride levels.

Date	Total Cholesterol	HDL	LDL	Triglycerides



STEP 4

Track Your Blood Sugar



If your body has trouble making or using insulin, you may have diabetes. With diabetes, too much sugar builds up in the blood. Having too much blood sugar can put your heart, kidneys, eyes, nerves, and other vital organs at risk for other health issues.

Currently, diabetes is the eighth leading cause of death in the U.S., and African Americans are 60% more likely than White Americans to be diagnosed with it. In children, the greatest increases in type 2 diabetes rates were seen in youth who are Black or Hispanic. It's also a leading cause of heart attack, stroke, and other serious health problems, including kidney disease, impotence, blindness, and amputations. Compared with people who develop diabetes in adulthood, youth are more likely to develop diabetes complications at an earlier age and are at higher risk of premature death.

Know the Numbers

The rate of American adults and children with diabetes is rising. About 28.5 million, or 11.3%, of American adults have been diagnosed with diabetes, while an estimated 8.5 million, or 3.4%, of American adults have

undiagnosed diabetes. On top of that, about 96 million, or 38%, of American adults have prediabetes. With prediabetes, your blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be considered to be type 2 diabetes.

Understand the Different Types

There are two main types of diabetes: type 1 and type 2. In both types, too much glucose builds up in the blood, which can cause serious complications for your health.

In type 1 diabetes, the body does not produce the insulin it needs. As a result, the body's cells don't have enough sugar in the bloodstream to use as energy. People with type 1 diabetes need to take insulin to live.

Most people have type 2 diabetes. In type 2 diabetes, either the body doesn't produce enough insulin or the cells resist the insulin that has been produced. People with type 2 diabetes often need to take oral prescription drugs, and some may use insulin or manage their conditions with lifestyle changes and weight loss.

While there's no cure for diabetes, keeping your blood sugar levels under control can be a big help in warding

off heart disease and other complications that come with the condition. That means watching your diet, exercising, managing your weight, and taking medication if recommended by your health care provider.

Testing for Diabetes

Many people with diabetes don't even realize they have it until it becomes serious or leads to a health complication. The only way to find out for sure whether you have diabetes is to have a blood test. Talk with your provider about whether you or your child should be screened, especially if you or your child is overweight or obese.

Managing Diabetes: A1c Tests

People with diabetes check their blood sugar several times a day by pricking their finger, drawing a drop of blood, and using a glucose meter to measure their blood sugar levels.

In addition to monitoring blood sugar at home, anyone with diabetes or high glucose levels should have regular check-ups with their primary care provider. These check-ups include a blood test called a **hemoglobin A1c (A1c)**. This test shows how well you have controlled your blood sugar over the past few months. If you have diabetes, you may need to have your A1c tested two to four times a year.

The A1c test is the best way to tell how you are doing at managing your glucose and insulin levels. If you get a result of less than 7%, you're likely doing well. Ask your provider what results you should aim for and what they mean for your health. Record your results on the chart to the right.

My A1c Test Results

EXAM DATE	OPTIMAL



Fasting Plasma Glucose Test Results (mg/dL)

A **fasting plasma glucose test** checks your glucose levels when you're fasting. For accurate results, you shouldn't have anything to eat or drink (except water) for at least 8 hours before the test. Use the following breakdown to understand your results.

- 70-99 mg/dL range: Results in this range are healthy.
- 100-125 mg/dL range: While results in this range are high, they're too low to be considered diabetes.

Instead, you have a condition called **impaired glucose tolerance**, which puts you at a higher risk for heart attack and stroke.

- 126 mg/dL or higher: Results in this range are considered diabetes.

___ I have talked with my provider about whether I should have a fasting plasma glucose test. (If the answer is "yes," record your results in the following chart.)

My Blood Sugar Test Results (mg/dL)		My Blood Sugar Measurement Falls into This Category: (Put a check mark in the appropriate column.)		
Date of Test	Result (mg/dL)	Healthy Normal (70-99)	Impaired Glucose Tolerance (100-125)	Diabetes (126 or higher)





Prevention and Control

Studies show that if you have impaired glucose tolerance, changes in your diet and exercise routine can prevent the development of diabetes.

Why is weight control so important for preventing or controlling diabetes? Having too much body fat makes it harder for the body to make and use insulin. This is especially true if you carry extra weight above your hips, rather than on your hips and thighs. This type of obesity is especially common among African Americans.

As you lose fat and build muscle, your body uses insulin. And for most people, losing a few pounds is enough to make a difference. According to research from the National Institutes of Health, losing just 10 pounds can lower the risk for diabetes for most people.

Even if you aren't overweight or obese, you may develop diabetes if you consume a high-calorie diet and don't exercise enough. Any lifestyle habits that add body fat raises your risk for diabetes—especially if you have a family history of diabetes, which adds to your risk for heart disease.

Without question, the best ways to prevent diabetes are to stay active, eat smart, and keep your weight down—the same things that help keep your heart healthy!

Summarizing Steps 1–4

You have now finished Step 4 of the *7 Steps to a Healthy Heart*. Are you also following these heart-healthy ABCs?

- **A1c test.** Have your blood sugar tested. If you have high blood sugar or diabetes, have an A1c test two to four times per year.
- **Blood pressure.** Get your blood pressure checked at least once a year starting at age 3.

- **Cholesterol.** Have a lipid panel at least once every five years starting at age 9, and more often if advised to do so by your provider.

The rest of this book will provide the tips you need to eat smart, enjoy regular exercise, manage your weight, not smoke, and access better health care.

So, on to Step 5!

STEP 5

Don't Use Tobacco

If you use tobacco (including smoking cigarettes, vaping, or in any other form) or are exposed to tobacco through secondhand smoke, quitting is one of the most important changes you can make for your heart and the health of those in your family. For one thing, your risk for heart attack will start to drop within one day of putting out that last cigarette. As you go longer without using tobacco, your risk will go down even more.

It is also important to discuss the harmful effects of smoking with your teen. More teenagers are vaping and the availability of flavored vaping products poses an additional threat to their addiction. Studies have shown teens who vape are more likely to smoke cigarettes as adults. Teens are also more vulnerable to nicotine addiction than adults.

Quitting tobacco isn't easy, but millions of people have done it. You and your family can, too! The information on these pages can help.

Make a Quit Plan

Quitting takes patience and a plan. You'll boost your chances of success by deciding on your quit plan ahead of time. This should include when you'll quit, how you'll deal with the urges to use tobacco (your triggers), whether you'll use a quit-smoking medication, and who you can ask to support you.

Not sure where to start? Ask your health care provider to work with you to create this plan or to recommend a quit program that can help. You can also call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or visit **smokefree.gov** to find helpful step-by-step advice.

Be Prepared to Work Through Withdrawal

The nicotine in tobacco is a powerful and addictive drug. Since your body is used to the effects of nicotine, not using tobacco after your quit day can bring on withdrawal. This can cause symptoms, such as mood swings, lower energy, and trouble thinking clearly.

Don't worry. These symptoms will go away. Until they do, the following tips can help you get tobacco-free.

Try This: Track Your Triggers

Do certain emotions, people, or places make you want tobacco? Knowing the things that make you want to use tobacco can help you avoid doing so in the future. To track your triggers:

1. For at least one day, every time you have the urge to use tobacco, make a note of the time of day and what you were doing just before you had the urge.
2. Look over your list. Do you see any patterns?
3. For each time you used tobacco, think about a way you could avoid the trigger or deal with it differently next time. This will become part of your quit plan.

Consider a Quit-Smoking Product

Using a quit-smoking medication or product makes you much more likely to quit for good. In fact, when used correctly, it can more than double your chance of quitting tobacco by helping you get through the toughest days of withdrawal when you first stop using tobacco.

Some products can be bought over the counter. Others require a prescription. Ones bought over the counter are not FDA approved for children but can be used under a physician's guidance. Before using any of these products, talk with your health care provider. They can help you make a safe decision about which product or products to try.

Over the Counter (OTC)	How It Works	Length of Treatment	Possible Side Effects
Nicotine Patch*	Gives you nicotine through the skin at a constant rate Ask your doctor about combining the patch with nicotine gum or nasal spray.	Take smaller and smaller doses over about 2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin rash, itching • Trouble sleeping • Nausea
Nicotine Gum*	Gives you nicotine through the mouth	Take smaller and smaller doses over about 2 to 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sore mouth or jaw • Indigestion, hiccups • Dizziness, nausea
Nicotine Lozenges*	Gives you nicotine through the mouth	Take smaller and smaller doses over about 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sore mouth • Belching, hiccups • Dizziness, nausea, weakness
Prescription Only	How It Works	Length of Treatment	Possible Side Effects
Nicotine Inhaler*	Nicotine is breathed in through the mouth	Use for as long as 6 months; take smaller and smaller doses over about 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mouth and throat irritation • Coughing
Bupropion SR	Reduces withdrawal symptoms and urges Does not contain nicotine	Start 2 weeks before you quit, then take for 2 to 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble sleeping • Dry mouth • Shakiness, anxiety • Skin rash
Varenicline	Blocks withdrawal symptoms and urges Does not contain nicotine	Start 1 week before you quit, then take for 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nausea, vomiting • Trouble sleeping • Constipation, gas

Some of these products may conflict with certain other prescription drugs or medical conditions. If you have questions, ask your pharmacist or health care provider.

**These products contain nicotine. Don't smoke or use tobacco while using a nicotine product. Doing so could give you a dangerous overdose of nicotine.*

Learn from Slip-Ups

What if you slip up and use tobacco while trying to quit? A slip doesn't mean you've failed. Look at it as a chance to learn. What were you doing when you used tobacco? Were you with another user? Were you lonely? If you find the reason for your slip, you can make a plan for how to deal with it next time. Then, get right back on track.

Any time you slip into tobacco use again, take control and get rid of the tobacco. If you tried to quit before and didn't succeed, don't doubt yourself this time. Use what you've learned to stay on track.

Keep Yourself Busy

Being active is a great way to distract yourself when the urge to use tobacco strikes. A little activity makes you less likely to want tobacco. It's also good for you! Here are some things you can try instead when you feel the urge to use tobacco:

- Text a friend.
- Play a game with your kids or grandkids.
- Walk around the block.
- Stretch your arms and shoulders.
- Drink a glass of water.
- Brush your teeth.
- Take a few deep breaths of fresh air outside.
- Do some jumping jacks.
- Write in a journal.



Get Lots of Support

It can be hard to ask for help, but getting support from others can help you stay free from tobacco. Ask a friend or family member:

- Whether you can call and talk when you get the urge to use tobacco.
- Not to use tobacco around you or keep tobacco in the house. Simply being around people when they're using tobacco puts your health at risk.
- To quit with you if they use tobacco too. Also, find out whether others you know are already trying to quit. You can learn from each other.



STEP 6

Eat Smart and Enjoy Regular Exercise

Eating right helps you stay healthy and vigorous, live longer, and feel good. A healthy diet can help you avoid a heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure, and diabetes. The key to eating well is focusing on:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Low-fat dairy products
- Poultry, fish, legumes, and nuts as protein sources

Meanwhile, try to avoid unhealthy fats and excess sugars. There is no one diet that's right for everyone. You can adopt healthier eating habits that work with your personal and cultural preferences.

Bacon, eggs, and buttery biscuits shouldn't be on your breakfast menu every morning. Instead, try:

- A bowl of whole-grain cereal with a sliced banana and skim milk
- Fresh blueberries on almond granola with skim milk or yogurt

Be creative! Eating smart means eating foods that are low in fat and rich in nutrients. Also, drink plenty of clean, refreshing water.

Cut Fat and Cholesterol

Eating too many unhealthy fats can raise your LDL, or "bad," cholesterol level, clog your arteries, and eventually lead to a heart attack or stroke. Check food labels for information on fats and learn more about different types of fats below.

Saturated fats

- Raise your "bad" cholesterol level more than other types of fat
- **Saturated fats** should comprise no more than 5 to 6% of your daily calories
- Found in butter, cheese, whole milk, lard, and fatty cuts of meat

Trans fats

- **Trans fats** are made by converting liquid oils into solid fats
- Found in margarine, shortening, and snacks or desserts that contain hydrogenated vegetable oil
- Can be avoided by cooking with light oil or using cooking spray instead of butter or margarine to oil pans

Dietary cholesterol

- Found in foods that come from animals, including meats, poultry, and dairy products
- Is especially high in egg yolks and organ meats, such as liver and kidney
- Not found in foods that come from plants, including fruits, vegetables, and grains

Monounsaturated fats and **polyunsaturated fats**

- These fats are preferable to less healthy fats and may lower LDL cholesterol
- Canola, olive, and peanut oils are high in monounsaturated fat
- Sesame and sunflower oils are high in polyunsaturated fat
- Polyunsaturated fats should be limited to 10% of your total daily calories
- Monounsaturated fats should account for no more than 10 to 15% of your total daily calories

Important Tip: It's not only about what foods you eat, but how you prepare your foods. For instance, grill or broil meats and veggies instead of frying them.

Avoid Sodium

To help keep your blood pressure down, eat less sodium (salt). Too much sodium is the main factor that may lead to high blood pressure in many people, especially African Americans and those who are overweight or obese.

Convenience foods are often high in sodium, so it helps to make your own meals from scratch. Try to limit your use of salt when you cook. Instead, use spices, herbs, and salt-free seasoning blends. Limit the amount of canned foods you eat, as they contain high amounts of sodium. Choose fresh or frozen foods instead.

Food labels tell you how much sodium is in a product. Consume no more than 2,300 mg/day of sodium. It's even better to limit the sodium you consume to 1,500 mg/day. This lower level can help you achieve an even greater reduction in blood pressure. Reducing your sodium intake by approximately 1,000 mg/day can significantly improve your blood pressure and heart health.

You may need support from friends or family to change your daily eating habits. You can also get support from your health care provider.

LIMIT THE AMOUNTS OF THESE FOODS

- Processed meats (bacon, sausage, hot dogs, salami, and bologna)
- Egg yolks
- Hash browns, French fries, cheeseburgers, and other fried foods
- Potato chips
- Donuts
- Pizza
- Whole milk, cream, and butter
- Candy
- Soft drinks



INCREASE THE AMOUNTS OF THESE FOODS

- Oatmeal or other whole-grain cereals
- Whole-wheat and rye bread
- Baked potatoes
- Sweet potatoes or yams
- Yogurt
- Fish
- Skinless turkey and chicken, especially the breast (white meat)
- Garlic and onions
- Salad
- Carrots, broccoli, and other vegetables
- Apples, bananas, and other fruits
- Skim milk
- 100% fruit juice
- Water



Stay Active at Any Age

No matter your age, you can find ways of staying active and having fun. Regular physical activity can help you feel better, stay healthier, and get things done.

Staying physically active can lower your blood pressure and your LDL, or “bad,” cholesterol level. It can also raise your HDL, or “good,” cholesterol level and lower your triglycerides. Exercise helps manage blood sugar to prevent the serious complications of diabetes. It can help reduce stress, and it’s necessary for losing or maintaining weight.

If you haven’t been active lately, it’s OK to start with small changes. Every little bit of exercise helps.

Ideas to Get You Moving

For motivation and accountability, try exercising with a family member or a friend. You could talk with friends while walking around the neighborhood together. Or you could start an exercise group at your place of worship.

Consider adding some of these activities to your daily routine. Check off the ones you would like to do.

- Get off the bus one or two stops early so that you end up walking farther.
- Park at the far end of the parking lot or park a few blocks away from your destination and walk.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Get up 15 minutes earlier in the morning and stretch.
- Work out along with an exercise video.
- Play your favorite dance music. Do the steps you know and enjoy but add some new moves.
- Play tag or other active games with your kids or grandchildren.
- Ride a stationary bike or use a treadmill while watching TV.
- Keep a pair of walking shoes at your office and take walks during lunch or breaks, either on your own or with a coworker.

My Exercise Record

Once you have an exercise plan, use the table below to track your progress over the next two weeks. Try to be active for at least 40 minutes each day.

DATE	ACTIVITY	TOTAL MINUTES

Follow an Exercise Plan

Adults should take part in aerobic physical activity at least three to four times a week, for about 40 minutes at a time. For children, it is recommended that they have 1 hour of physical activity each day. Try to make your exercise moderate to vigorous in intensity. You can do 40 to 60 minutes all at once, or you can exercise a few times a day for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Talk with your health care provider before starting an exercise program, especially if you have a health condition.

The key to a successful exercise program is to find activities that you enjoy doing and that fit into your daily routine.

To encourage children to be more physically active, limit their screen time. Children under age 2 should not have screen time without parental supervision. You may consider allowing your children to earn screen time if they engage in exercise or outside play.

Use the list below to help select the activities that you want to do as part of your exercise plan. Also, talk with your provider about which types of exercise would be best for you. If you aren't used to exercising, start with moderate activities and work your way up to more vigorous activities.

MODERATE ACTIVITIES	VIGOROUS ACTIVITIES
Walking	Bicycling
Gardening	Jogging or running
Dancing	Aerobics
Vacuuming	Swimming
Raking leaves	Water aerobics
Climbing stairs	Soccer or football
Yoga	Baseball
Bowling	Tennis
Golf	Basketball

Maintain a Healthy Weight

You're not alone if you are carrying around extra pounds. Unfortunately, more than two out of every five U.S. adults are obese (42.4%), and the rates are even higher among African Americans, especially African American women. Obesity also affects approximately 14.7 million children and adolescents. Obesity-related conditions—heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer—are some of the leading causes of preventable death.

Losing even just a small amount of weight is likely to help in several ways. Losing weight helps to:

- Lower your blood pressure (thus, lowering your risk for heart attack and stroke)
- Lower LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and triglycerides (thus, lowering your risk for heart disease and stroke)
- Keep your blood sugar from rising (thus, lowering your risk for diabetes)
- Raise self-esteem
- Improve depression symptoms
- Lower your risk of arthritis

If you suspect your child is obese, discuss your child's weight category with their primary provider. Obesity in children varies based on their age and gender.

Your genes, your environment, and emotional factors can all contribute to obesity. But no matter what the causes are, it boils down to this: You are taking in more calories than you use. Eating right and exercising regularly will help you get the balance right.



STEP 7

Be Spiritually Active and Reduce Stress

Making spirituality part of your life can benefit your physical and emotional health. Studies have shown that African Americans who attend places of worship regularly may live longer than those who do not. Plus, they have happier, healthier lives.

While faith takes some effort, it brings rich rewards. So, find time in your life to attend a church, mosque, or synagogue, or even just to meditate. The more spiritually active you are, the more you may benefit.

Developing Spirituality—Your Way

Being spiritually active helps bring meaning to life, and it can provide tools to help you cope with life's challenges. Tending to the emotional aspects of your health is important because your emotional health goes hand-in-hand with your physical well-being.

One area in which spirituality can have a positive impact is reducing stress. When stress becomes overwhelming and is not well-managed, it can have a negative impact on your health.

In addition to attending a place of worship, you can hone your spirituality and manage stress in other ways. These may include:

- Adopting a positive attitude
- Recognizing your limits
- Sharing your feelings with friends and family members
- Staying active in your community
- Caring for a child or pet
- Practicing meditation or yoga
- Pursuing hobbies, such as gardening, cooking, painting, music, woodworking, or sports

Reaching Out to Others

Connecting with others plays a major role in spiritual development and stress management. You might volunteer in the community, lend an ear to a friend in need, tutor a child, help your neighbor with a home repair, or visit someone who is ill. You could even learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and how to measure blood pressure so you can help others maintain their health.

Is Laughing the Best Medicine?

Yes! Scientists have found that emotions affect the health of our minds and bodies in complex and powerful ways. Just like practicing spirituality, laughing lifts you up in ways that improve your health.

Children and Stress

Childhood and adolescence can produce stress. Children may demonstrate that they are stressed differently than adults, and children in crisis may go unrecognized. Unmanaged trauma at home or school can have long-term consequences. In some cases, professional help may be necessary. However, you can help your children combat stress with these strategies recommended by the American Psychological Association:

- Encourage good sleep habits
- Encourage physical activity and outside play
- Discuss stressful situations or encourage them to journal
- Limit screen time and help them to navigate social media
- Help them process negative self-thoughts and promote positive thoughts
- Model good coping skills

Track Your Spiritual Activity and Coping Strategies

Put a check beside the items that apply to you and note your own activities in the spaces provided.

___ I attend a place of worship regularly.

___ I meditate or pray frequently.

___ I volunteer in these activities: _____

___ I serve my community in these ways: _____

___ I reach out and care for others in these ways: _____

___ I enjoy these hobbies and activities: _____

___ I will explore these new activities: _____

___ I maintain a positive attitude most of the time.

___ I understand that nobody's perfect and set realistic goals for myself and others.

___ I am using these coping strategies: _____

To help make lifestyle changes that will last a lifetime, start small. Try making one change at a time. Then, add another when you feel that you have successfully adopted the earlier changes. Once you are practicing several healthy lifestyle habits, you'll be more likely to achieve and maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Glossary

A1c test: A type of blood test used to determine whether blood sugar is in a healthy range.

Angina: A condition in which the heart muscle does not get enough blood and causes pain, squeezing, or tightness in the chest.

Aspirin: A compound commonly used to thin the blood or treat pain or inflammation.

Atherosclerosis: The narrowing and hardening of the arteries, caused when cholesterol and other substances build up inside the artery walls.

Atrial fibrillation: A condition in which the heart beats too fast or irregularly.

Blood pressure: The amount of force blood exerts against the walls of your blood vessels.

Cardiovascular disease: A disease of the heart or blood vessels.

Cholesterol: A waxy, fat-like substance your body uses to make cells and perform other important functions.

Coronary heart disease: Disease of the coronary arteries, which carry blood to the heart.

Diabetes: A condition in which your body doesn't make enough insulin to handle the sugar in the blood, or the body can't use the insulin it makes, or both.

Familial hypercholesterolemia (FH): Genetic disorder that can severely raise the level of harmful LDL, or "bad," cholesterol.

Fasting plasma glucose test: A blood test that shows how much glucose (sugar) is in your blood. It can help diagnose diabetes.

Glucose: A type of sugar that your body converts food into so your cells can use it for energy.

HDL cholesterol: The "good" type of cholesterol, which helps the blood get rid of excess LDL cholesterol.

Heart attack: A medical emergency that happens when blood flow to the heart is blocked in a coronary artery.

High blood pressure: A condition in which the blood flowing through your vessels is pushing too hard against the vessel walls. Also called hypertension.

Hypertension: High blood pressure.

Impaired glucose tolerance: A condition in which blood sugar is higher than normal but not high enough to diagnose diabetes.

Insulin: A chemical in the blood that helps the cells use the sugar they need for energy.

LDL cholesterol: The "bad" type of cholesterol, which can deposit on the insides of your artery walls and cause a blockage.

Lipid panel: A blood test usually done after you've fasted for 8 to 10 hours that tells how much total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides are in your blood.

Monounsaturated fat: A healthier type of dietary fat that may help lower your "bad" cholesterol level.

Peripheral artery disease (PAD): A reduction in blood flow to the extremities, most often to the legs and feet, usually caused by atherosclerosis.

Polyunsaturated fat: A healthier type of dietary fat that may help lower your "bad" cholesterol level.

Saturated fats: "Bad" types of dietary fat you get from some foods. Saturated fats raise the level of "bad" cholesterol in the blood.

Stroke: A "brain attack," where blood flow to the brain is suddenly interrupted.

Trans fats: Types of dietary fat that raise your "bad" cholesterol level.

Triglycerides: Types of fat found in your blood.

Resources

American College of Cardiology (ACC)

800-253-4636, ext. 5603
www.acc.org

American Diabetes Association (ADA)

800-DIABETES (800-342-2383)
www.diabetes.org

American Heart Association

800-242-8721
www.heart.org

Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc. (ABC)

800-753-9222
www.abcardio.org

CardioSmart (American College of Cardiology)

800-253-4636
www.cardiosmart.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

800-232-4636
www.cdc.gov

Million Hearts

millionhearts.hhs.gov

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute NHLBI Information Center

301-592-8573
www.nhlbi.nih.gov

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse (NDIC)

800-860-8747
www.niddk.nih.gov

Recipe for Healthy Living

Here's a simple recipe to promote a healthy lifestyle. Practice these steps for a richer—and healthier—life.

- Follow the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet.
- Be physically active.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- If you smoke, quit.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Manage and cope with stress.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Add a generous dash of adventure or fun.
- Also, add a bunch of love (enough to share).
- Mix well and live long.



It's a Family Affair!

Congratulations!

By reading this booklet and using the charts, you have taken a giant step toward a healthier heart for you and your family. Try not to feel overwhelmed by the number of lifestyle changes you need to make.

Every step you take in the right direction will make it that much easier to take the next step. You're not just doing this for yourself.

You're taking care of yourself for your family and for your loved ones. Take pride in your accomplishments.

You deserve it!