7 habits for a healthy heart

Don't wait until you have a problem to change your habits. Take action now to lower your risk. Here are 7 habits for your heart health.

1 Keep a healthy weight. To help you lose weight, be more active. Walk 5 extra minutes each week. Eat less food by serving smaller helpings. Choose foods lower in calories and higher in fiber likes veggies and whole grains.

2 Be active each day. Aim for a half hour or more each day. Studies show this can cut your risk of heart problems in half – even if you don't lose weight.

3 Eat heart healthy meals. Check food labels to make sure your meals or snacks have zero trans-fat. Limit soft drinks, beef, pork and breakfast/lunch meat. Stock up on fresh fruits and veggies. Eat more beans, nuts and whole grains.

4 Don't smoke. Smoking is the cause of 1 out of every 5 heart attacks. As soon as you stop smoking, your risk of a heart attack drops. Within 5 years of quitting, your risk of a heart attack is half that of a smoker.

5 Live a balanced life. Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep each night. Take time to relax and have fun, every day. Keep your stress level low. High levels of stress can take a toll on your heart health.

6 Limit sugar and soft drinks. Sugary foods and drink raise the risk for weight gain, high blood fats and high blood sugar. All of these can damage your heart.

7 Get regular exams. If you're over the age of 40, get checked by a doctor each year. Have these tests done:

> Cholesterol test

> Blood pressure check

> Blood sugar check

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