



# HOW'S YOUR HEART?

## February is American Heart Month

### Prevention

1. Schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider to learn your personal risk for heart disease.
2. Quit smoking. Did you know that just one year after you quit, you'll cut your risk of coronary heart disease by 50%?
3. Start an exercise program. Walking just 30 minutes a day can lower your risk for heart attack and stroke.
4. Modify your family's diet if needed. Check out the healthy cooking tips at [www.goredforwomen.org](http://www.goredforwomen.org). You'll learn smart substitutions, healthy snacking ideas and better prep methods. For example, with poultry, use the leaner light meat (breasts) instead of the fattier dark meat (legs and thighs), and be sure to remove the skin.
5. Maintain a healthy weight. Carrying excess weight – especially around your middle – can lead to conditions that increase the risk of heart disease, including diabetes and high blood pressure.
6. Get enough sleep. Not getting enough sleep puts us at greater risk for obesity, high blood pressure, heart attacks, diabetes and depression.
7. Manage stress in healthy ways — ways that don't undermine health like drinking, smoking and over eating.
8. Get regular health screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol levels and diabetes.
9. Stay in touch with friends and family and do things you love. Loneliness and low sense of purpose are hard on your heart.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. Each year, one in four deaths are caused by heart disease.

### Heart Healthy Exercise Habits

**Q. What is the best type of exercise for my heart?**

**A. Aerobic/cardiovascular exercise** is the type that is rhythmic, continuous and uses large muscle groups. Some examples include walking, swimming, cycling, hiking, snowshoeing, X-country skiing, kayaking, etc.

**Q. How often should I exercise?**

**A. Most days of the week:** Five to six days per week

**Q. How long should I exercise?**

**A. 30 minutes or more per session:** Thirty minutes at start of exercise program. Increase duration by 5-10 minutes as tolerated after week two.

# HOW'S YOUR HEART?

## Who do you love and how well do you know your own heart?

Give yourself a point for each piece of information or question you know, for a possible total of 14 points. See if you score 10 or higher!

1. In the United States and most developed countries, **cardiovascular disease (CVD)** is the leading cause of death in men and women, premature or otherwise.
2. Cardiovascular disease is an umbrella category that includes stroke, coronary heart disease (**CHD; also called coronary artery disease**), which is a narrowing of the coronary arteries due to a build-up of plaque. Over time, the build-up constricts the normal flow of blood.
3. The following have been identified as major risk factors for CVD, all of which are modifiable:
  - a. Smoking
  - b. Overweight and obesity
  - c. Unhealthy diet
  - d. Physical inactivity
  - e. Dyslipidemia - abnormal level of cholesterol and other lipids
  - f. Hypertension - abnormally high blood pressure
  - g. Diabetes
4. Observational studies have consistently shown that individuals consuming diets high in vegetables and fruits, such as the Mediterranean diet, have a reduced risk of CVD.
5. After CVD, cigarette smoking is the leading avoidable cause of premature death (any death before the age of 75) and a major avoidable cause of premature disability. Evidence indicates that the heart benefits of quitting begin to appear after only a few months and reach that of the nonsmoker in several years, even among older adults. Thus, for CVD, it is never too late to quit, whereas for cancer it is never too early, as the risks relate largely to duration rather than amount currently smoked.
6. Modest amounts of regular physical activity, such as brisk walking for 20 minutes daily, are associated with significant benefits on risk of CHD. Nonetheless, perhaps less than 20 percent of United States adults achieve this level of daily activity.
7. In the United States and worldwide, overweight and obesity are overtaking cigarettes as the leading modifiable cause of premature deaths. Data from large prospective cohort studies have consistently shown that individuals with higher body weights have a linear increase in morbidity and mortality from CHD.
8. How much love can fit in your heart?

Source: UpToDate



## Know the Signs of Heart Disease

There are definite early warning signs and symptoms of heart attacks. One could experience all, some, a few, or none of these symptoms:

- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Unusual or extreme fatigue
- Breaking out in a cold sweat
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Upper body discomfort (jaw, neck, back pain)

Visit [northernlighthouse.org/hearthealth](http://northernlighthouse.org/hearthealth)