

Your Guide to Heart Health

Adopting a healthy lifestyle is the key to having your heart perform at its best

HEALTH AND WELLNESS INFORMATION





Why is heart health important?

Your heart is made up of muscle, blood vessels and valves that work together to pump blood to all areas of your body. When you have high blood pressure and/or high cholesterol, your heart has to work harder. This can cause damage to your heart and blood vessels, which might lead to serious health issues like a heart attack.



What you should know about high blood pressure

High blood pressure (hypertension) is known as a silent killer because there are usually no signs or symptoms. Your blood pressure should be around 120/80, but your doctor or health provider might set a different goal for you based on your health history.

When you have high blood pressure, your heart is working harder than it should to pump blood through your body. This can lead to:

- **Heart failure:** The heart is not able to pump enough blood to meet the body's needs.
- **Heart attack:** The arteries bringing oxygen to the heart become blocked, leading to heart muscle damage.
- **Stroke:** A blood clot blocks an artery carrying blood to the brain or an artery bursts, preventing blood flow to the brain.
- **Impaired vision:** Blood vessels in the eye break, causing blurred vision and even blindness.
- **Kidney failure:** Kidney blood vessels narrow so the kidneys cannot filter the blood properly, causing waste to circulate and build up in the bloodstream.



One in three U.S. adults has high blood pressure. Of these, half do not have it under control. Are you one of them?

Tips to reduce high blood pressure

- Maintain a healthy weight. A weight loss of just 10 pounds can lower blood pressure.
- Include plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products in your diet. Avoid saturated fat.
- Check your blood pressure often. A home blood pressure monitor can make it easier to track your measurements. Share the results with your provider.
- Ask your provider to explain any medication you are prescribed. Be sure to take it as directed.



What you should know about high cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance in the blood. Your liver makes most of the cholesterol your body needs, but you also get some from the foods you eat. Too much cholesterol can cause a sticky substance called plaque to build up in your blood vessels. Plaque can block blood vessels and cause heart attacks and strokes.

Picture your heart as a pump and your blood vessels or arteries as pipes. The narrower the pipes are, the harder the pump has to work. When plaque from cholesterol blocks or narrows your blood vessels, the heart must pump harder to move blood through your body. This increases your blood pressure, which can hurt the heart and vessels over time.

Most people with high cholesterol feel healthy. The only way to know if you have high cholesterol is to have your cholesterol checked. You can get a simple blood test to check your cholesterol level.



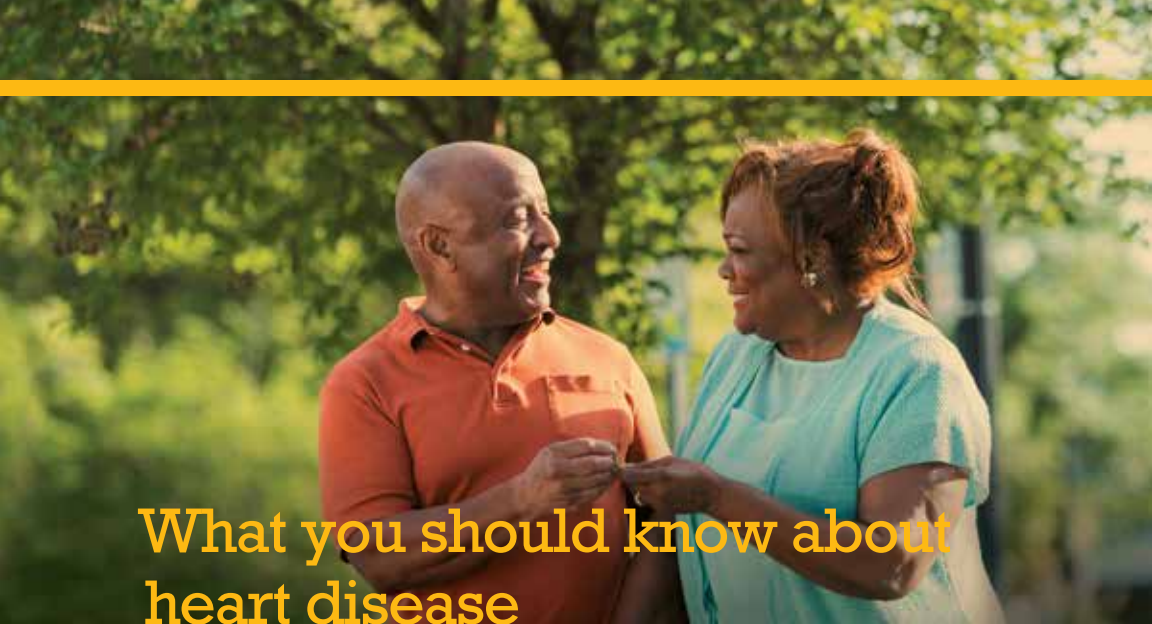
If you have high total cholesterol, you are **twice as likely** to develop heart disease as someone with a healthy level.

Optimal Blood Cholesterol Numbers

Total cholesterol	Less than 200
HDL – “good” cholesterol (high-density lipoprotein)	60 or higher
LDL – “bad” cholesterol (low-density lipoprotein)	Less than 100
Triglycerides	Less than 150

Tips to help reduce your cholesterol.


- Include oatmeal, apples, prunes and beans in your diet. They are high in soluble fiber, which keeps your body from absorbing cholesterol.
- Get active! Aim for 30 to 60 minutes a day of an exercise you enjoy.
- If diet and exercise don't help, ask your doctor about medications to help lower your cholesterol.



What you should know about heart disease

High blood pressure and high cholesterol are both risk factors for heart disease. The term heart disease refers to several types of heart conditions. The most common type is coronary artery disease (CAD), which can cause a heart attack. Other kinds of heart disease include problems with the valves in the heart or the heart may not pump well and cause heart failure.

There are some risk factors you can't control, such as race, gender and family history. The good news is your blood pressure and cholesterol can be controlled with medication and/or healthy lifestyle choices. Discuss any questions or concerns about your blood pressure and/or cholesterol with your health provider. He or she can give you additional recommendations based on your medical history or other individual health risk factors.



In the United States, heart disease is the **leading cause of death** for both men and women. Check your risk factors.

Learn more about managing your heart health on My Health Plan. Access interactive videos and learning modules, including:

- Heart-focused videos on healthy weight, daily habits for healthy eating, and medication and treatment options
- Information and assessment tools for high blood pressure, heart disease, heart failure and coronary artery disease
- Symptom Checker to help you understand your health issues

Log in to [MedMutual.com/member](https://www.MedMutual.com/member) and go to Quick Links. Then click on Interactive Health Education, Health Resource Center or Symptom Checker.

Tips and tools for a healthy heart

You need to keep your heart healthy, even if you're not at risk for high blood pressure or high cholesterol. Here are some steps you can take for a healthier heart:

- Follow a healthy diet. Eat a well-balanced diet and try to buy fresh or frozen vegetables instead of canned to limit salt intake.
- Exercise. Control your weight, lower your blood pressure and raise your “good” cholesterol with regular exercise. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of activity every day. Some activity is better than none.
- Limit alcohol. Too much alcohol may raise your blood pressure.
 - Men should have no more than two drinks per day.
 - Women should have no more than one drink per day.
- Quit using tobacco.
 - Chemicals in cigarette smoke react with cholesterol. This causes fatty buildup on blood vessel walls.
 - The nicotine in tobacco causes blood vessels to narrow, which can lead to higher blood pressure.
 - Medical Mutual's tobacco cessation program can help you with a personalized quit plan and support. Call (866) 845-7702 [TTY (888) 228-2182] to find out how to sign up for free. You can call seven days a week between 7 a.m. and 1 a.m.

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