Getting Heart Healthy

Top 3 Causes of Death in the U.S.
According the Center for Disease Control, the top 3 killers are:
1. Heart Disease
2. Cancer
3. Stroke (cerebrovascular diseases)
Heart disease and stroke account for about 750,000 deaths a year. By managing some simple steps, you can reduce your risk of heart disease.

Nutrition
Following some nutritional goals can help you be heart healthy. These goals are to have:
- At least 4 to 5 cups of fruits and vegetables daily,
- At least two 3.5 ounces of oily fish (i.e. salmon, pollock, light tuna (not Albacore)) servings a week,
- At least three 1-ounce servings a day of fiber-rich whole grains,
- Less than 1,500 mg of sodium a day,
- Not more than 36 ounces of sugar-sweetened beverages a week (including juice, soda, or sweetened tea),
- No more than 2 servings of processed meats a week,
- Less than 7% of total intake of saturated fat.

Some heart healthy recipes can be obtained at the American Heart Association website:
http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Recipes/Recipes_UCM_001184_SubHomePage.jsp

Physical Activity
Physical activity boosts mental and physical health. It helps develop stronger immunity, reduce risk factors for diseases, and prolong optimal health. According to the American Heart Association website, the benefits of physical activity include:
- Improves blood circulation, which reduces the risk of heart disease
- Keeps weight under control
• Helps in the battle to quit smoking
• Improves blood cholesterol levels
• Prevents and manages high blood pressure
• Prevents bone loss
• Boosts energy level
• Helps manage stress
• Releases tension
• Promotes enthusiasm and optimism
• Counts anxiety and depression
• Helps you fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly
• Improves self-image
• Increases muscle strength, increasing the ability to do other physical activities
• Provides a way to share an activity with family and friends
• Reduces coronary heart disease in women by 30-40 percent
• Reduces risk of stroke by 20% in moderately active people and by 27% in highly active individuals
• Establishes good heart-healthy habits that counter the conditions (obesity, high blood pressure, poor cholesterol levels, poor lifestyle habits, etc.) that lead to heart attack and stroke later in life
• Helps delay or prevent chronic illnesses and diseases associated with aging and maintains quality of life and independence longer for older adults

**Cholesterol**
About 75% of cholesterol is made from your body and the other 25% is obtained through food. HDL is considered the “good” cholesterol and having a high number can help protect your heart. One of the functions HDL has is the ability to remove LDL found in the arteries. LDL is considered the “bad” cholesterol and is naturally made by the body. Too much LDL in the blood stream can clog your arteries. Eating less saturated fat and trans-fat can help lower the LDL, while eating more unsaturated fats, such as oily fish, omega-3, and using olive oil for cooking, can help increase the HDL.

Having a total cholesterol level of 200 mg/dL or higher puts you in a high-risk category. Optimal LDL level is less than 100 mg/dL and optimal HDL level is 60 mg/dL or above.

**Blood Pressure**
Blood Pressure is known as the “silent killer.” One in three adults have high blood pressure, but 21% do not know it.
High blood pressure forces your heart to work harder and puts pressure on your arteries, which could result in tears. When an artery tears, the body will heal these tears with scar tissue. These scar tissues can cause clots and harden or weaken arteries further.

The normal range for blood pressure is less than 120 mm Hg systolic and less than 80 mm Hg diastolic.

**Maintain a Healthy Weight**

Being overweight or obese can increase your risk of heart disease. Having a bigger waistline relative to your hip can also increase your risk of heart disease. Though it’s not always accurate, using the body mass index (BMI) can help you determine if you are at a healthy weight relative to your height.

**BMI**

A BMI between the range of 18 and 24.9 is considered healthy, between 25 and 29 is considered overweight, and over 30 is considered obese.

**Blood Glucose Level**

Adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have heart disease or a stroke. Controlling blood sugar is very important to minimize the complications associated with diabetes. Blood glucose levels can be monitored through blood samples and controlled through appropriate food consumption.

Normal fasting blood glucose level is between 82 to 110 mg/dL. Having a fasting blood glucose level over 126 mg/dL is considered to be in the diabetic range.

**Smoking**

If you aren’t smoking, you are already one step ahead of the game to protecting your heart. If you are smoking, by quitting, you can help protect your heart further. Smoking increases risk factors of coronary heart disease and decreases your tolerance for physical activity. Smoking also has a tendency to increase the risks blood clots.

Sources:

[www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)