Know Your Numbers for a Healthy Heart

Do you have a healthy heart? Your health care provider can tell you, and can also help you keep your heart strong and healthy.

Know your numbers

These five numbers can help you and your doctor assess your heart health risk for heart disease:

- Blood pressure

- Total cholesterol

- Triglyceride level

- Body mass index

- Waist measurement

Some of these numbers you can determine yourself. For others, your health care provider will need to order lab tests.
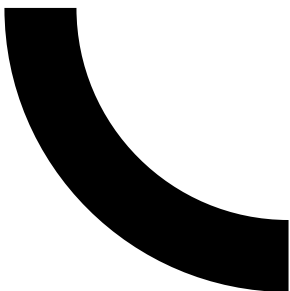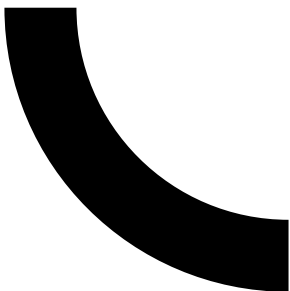
Take action! These five daily lifestyle goals can help you

improve your heart health:

- Exercise.

- Watch your total calories.

- Reduce your sodium intake.

- Stay hydrated.

- Get a good night's sleep.

Staying healthy isn't only about the foods you eat. Check out our Guide to Staying Healthy to learn other ways you can put your health first.

Read Our Guide to Staying Healthy

Five Heart Health Numbers

If your five heart health numbers are higher than the goals below, your health care provider can advise you on changes you can make to bring them down.

Blood Pressure of 120/80 or lower

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is sometimes called the silent killer because people with high blood pressure usually don't feel any symptoms. When you have high blood pressure, your heart works harder. This puts increased pressure on your blood vessels. High blood pressure can be controlled with medication, diet changes, and regular exercise.

Total cholesterol level (LDL plus HDL) of 200 mg/dL or lower

Your body produces cholesterol. The amount of cholesterol in your blood can show whether you are at risk for heart disease. The food you eat can affect how much cholesterol your body produces. You may be surprised to know that high-cholesterol foods don't always increase the level of cholesterol in your blood. In fact, foods that are high in trans fats and saturated fats are more likely to increase cholesterol levels than foods that contain cholesterol. A blood test will show the levels of both LDL (bad) cholesterol and HDL (good) cholesterol. Make it a goal to increase HDL and reduce LDL by following a low-fat diet and exercising regularly.

Triglyceride level of 150 mg/dL or lower

Triglycerides are fats, and their level in your blood can increase with aging and weight gain. If your doctor tells you that your triglyceride level is high, losing weight and changing your diet can help to lower your level.

Body mass index (BMI) of 25 or less

BMI can show whether a person is at a healthy weight in relation to their height. However, BMI isn't always an accurate sign of heart health. You can have a healthy heart even if you have a high BMI. Visit the [American Heart Association website](#) to learn more about BMI and how to calculate it.

Waist measurement of 35 inches or less for women or 40 inches or less for men

People who have a lot of fat around their waist are at higher risk for several health problems, including heart disease, than people with less waist fat. To measure your waist, place a tape measure loosely around your bare abdomen just above your hipbones. Be sure that the tape is snug but not tight.

Five Daily Lifestyle Goals

Are your numbers in line with the goals above? If so, congratulations! But there's good news if your numbers don't measure up. You can take steps that can bring them down — keeping your heart strong, lowering your risk of heart disease, and helping you live a healthier life.

30 minutes of exercise

Walking or doing other moderate exercise for 30 minutes a day is proven to improve heart function. The good news is that you can break your exercise up throughout the day. Walking to and from places you need to go like work or the grocery store may get you close to 30 minutes. Add a walk at lunch or after dinner, and you've met your goal.

2,000 total calories

We get energy from the food we eat and the beverages we drink. This energy is measured in calories. 2000 total calories is the recommend amount for most adults. However, calorie needs depend on a person's age, weight, gender, height, activity level and much more. Foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat proteins, and foods with unsaturated fats (like nuts, olives, and avocadoes) can help to reduce the risk of heart disease. Limit or avoid foods with saturated fats (found in cheese, whole milk, and meat with visible fat) and trans fats (found in doughnuts, pastries, cookies,

crackers, muffins, bacon, and pizza dough). Consume no more than 2 grams of trans fats and 20 grams of saturated fat per day.

1,500mg of sodium (salt) or less

Salt can cause your body to retain water, which can lead to high blood pressure. Avoid foods high in salt, such as processed foods, smoked meats, potato chips, soy sauce, canned goods, ketchup, and fast foods.

Stay Hydrated

1,500mg of sodium (salt) or less can cause your heart to work harder than it normally does and may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and heart attack. Make sure you are [drinking enough water](), especially during hot days, to avoid dehydration. If you have cardiovascular conditions, talk to your provider about the best ways to stay hydrated.

Get Enough Sleep

Getting a [good night's sleep]() contributes to overall health, decreasing stress levels that may increase your risk for heart disease. But getting too much sleep can impact your heart health. According to the [Journal of the American Heart Association](), sleeping too much can increase your risk of cardiovascular disease. Remember to get the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep.