



February is a month to think about matters of the heart. It is a good time to assess habits and routines in regards to heart health. Some risk factors for heart disease can not be changed, such as age, sex or family history. However, there are lifestyle strategies you can implement to lower your risk of heart disease. An article by the Mayo Clinic Staff outlines 8 strategies that can be implemented for heart health. These strategies are:

1. ***“Don’t smoke or use tobacco.”*** It is never too late to quit! Even after one day of not smoking, your risk of heart disease begins to decrease.
2. ***“Get moving: Aim for at least 30 to 60 minutes of activity daily.”*** Physical activity lowers your chances of getting high cholesterol, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes; which are all conditions that may put strain on the heart. While the goal is 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity per day, shorter amounts of activity can also help. Some activity is better than none.
3. ***“Eat a heart-healthy diet.”*** Diets that are good for the heart include foods such as: fruits and vegetables, low-fat or fat-free dairy foods and whole grains. Foods that should be limited for heart health include foods such as: high sodium foods, highly processed food, saturated fats, and highly refined carbohydrates. (For the full lists from this article, click on the link below.)
4. ***“Maintain a healthy weight.”*** High blood pressure, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes are conditions that increase the risk of heart disease; and these conditions may be increased with being overweight. For those with high BMI (body mass index) or extra weight, even small amounts of weight loss can be beneficial.
5. ***“Get quality sleep.”*** At least 7 hours of sleep is what most adults should be getting. Inadequate sleep has been linked to higher risks of heart attacks, obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and depression.
6. ***“Manage stress.”*** Unmanaged stress can increase heart disease risk factors such as high blood pressure. Also, some who are under stress turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as smoking, overeating or drinking, which are unhealthy for the heart. Managing stress through healthy coping strategies instead, such as exercise and mindfulness, can enhance your health.
7. ***“Get regular health screening tests.”*** Screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol and type 2 diabetes will give you information to know if you are within the healthy ranges, or if lifestyle habits or other means of action are needed to maintain healthy ranges.
8. ***“Take steps to prevent infections.”*** Heart conditions may become worse by illnesses caused by infections. To prevent infections, stay current with vaccine recommendations such as vaccines for the flu, COVID, pneumococcal and Tdap.

For more information on each of these strategies from the Mayo Clinic Staff, click here:

[Strategies to Prevent Heart Disease](#)