



Heart Health

GUIDE

One of the most effective ways of avoiding heart disease or stroke is to maintain a healthy weight. According to the American Heart Association, between 60 and 70 percent of American adults are overweight or obese.

Commit to sticking to a workout plan to benefit your heart health.

If you're just beginning your journey of weight loss, one tool you can use is a "food diary." Jot down the foods and beverages you consume, as well as their nutritional value. After a few weeks, meet with a nutritionist to see where you can make positive adjustments.

Trying to lose weight can be a frustrating experience, but with strict commitment and a plan in mind, it is a rewarding experience that greatly benefits heart health.

TAKE A HIKE

Find time to get outdoors and exercise. Spring is a great time to start, when wildlife is returning and trees and flowers are flourishing. Taking a hike is a great way to invite spring and obtain excellent heart benefits.

A report by the American Heart Association suggests brisk walking can lower the risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes, just as much as running.

Before setting off on a hiking excursion, keep these



safety tips from the American Hiking Society in mind:

- Inform people of your planned path and of an estimated return time;
- Be aware of expected weather and pack accordingly; and
- Know your routes by studying a map.

With safety in mind, hiking can be a wonderful adventure

for the entire family.

JOIN A SWIMMING CLUB

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, swimming just two-and-a-half hours per week, will help you obtain all the aerobic heart health benefits your body needs.

If you struggle with sore bones or joints during exer-

cise, a swimming regimen will help you boost heart health while experiencing less stress. It is a great way to get started on your weight-loss journey, or if you suffer from a condition such as arthritis or overall muscle soreness.

MAY I HAVE THIS DANCE?

Grab a partner and sign up

for a dance class. Increasing your heart rate is key to strengthening your overall health.

This fun activity is a fun way to build bonds with your partner as well as surround yourself with a social environment. Enlist the help of a local dance instructor to help stimulate both your body and the local economy.

Slow Down During Meals

Spring means barbecues with friends, outdoor picnics and other social gatherings to invite the warm weather. In addition to eating heart-healthy foods, new studies show that how you eat can also negatively impact your health.

Research by the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions shows eating in a hurry greatly increases risks of metabolic syndrome. This disease affects about 23 percent of American adults and heightens the chances of heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

WHAT IS METABOLIC SYNDROME?

According to the National Institutes of Health, metabolic syndrome is the name for a group of risk factors that increase risk of coronary heart disease. CHD is a condition in which plaque builds up inside the coronary arteries, which can lead to chest pains, heart attack or even death.

Studies show that eating quickly can cause a disturbance in the body's process of metabolizing oxygen.

When this occurs, glucose fluctuation causes oxidative stress, which in turn affects the



body's natural production of insulin. This is a key contributor to a build-up of sugar in the blood that causes diabetes.

OTHER RISKS

While eating quickly certainly plays a role in metabolic syndrome, there are other risk factors that contribute to heart disease. Here are some of the most common, as reported by

the NIH.

- **A large waistline:** Commonly called abdominal obesity, having excess fat in the stomach is a greater risk factor for heart disease than in other parts of the body.

- **High blood pressure:** This dangerous disease causes damage to the heart and promotes plaque build-up if left untreated.

- **Low HDL levels:** HDL is known as healthy cholesterol. When levels are low, it is unable to remove bad cholesterol from arteries. This is a risk for heart disease.

WHY EATING HABITS MATTER

Research by the North American Association for the Study of Obesity shows men

and women took in less calories when they slowed their normal eating pace.

This is thought to be because it takes the brain about 20 minutes to signal feelings of fullness. Pacing yourself while eating allows time for these triggers to be released and will result in eating less — a true win-win for your heart.

Heart Health Super Foods

In addition to exercise, a healthy diet is crucial for optimal heart health. Incorporating “superfoods” into your daily intake has been shown to help reduce the risk of atherosclerosis — the buildup of fatty deposits in artery walls.

When planning a healthy diet, it is important to consider the number of calories you’re ingesting, or you may be sabotaging yourself with an unhealthy weight gain, which can cause serious heart problems.

Before beginning any drastic change in your eating habits, be sure to consult with your doctor or a nutritionist to plan a diet that benefits your situation.

COMMON SUPER FOODS

While building your shopping list, consider the layout of your favorite store. Make sure most of your groceries are purchased around the store’s perimeter. This is where you’ll find mostly fresh fruits, vegetables and lean meats.

According to the American Heart

Association, these awesome foods can provide you big benefits in the fight for a healthy heart.

Turkey: It’s not just for Thanksgiving anymore. When planning a meal that features ground beef, consider this leaner substitute. It can add a splash of health in favorites like chili, casseroles and even grilled patties.

Low-fat yogurt: A great source of calcium, Vitamin D and protein. The AHA also suggests using it in recipes as a substitute for sour cream.

Berries: Load up with healthy blueberries or strawberries. According to the AHA, about four-and-a-half cups of fruits and vegetables per day can lower the risk of a heart attack.

Salmon: A great source of protein,

omega-3 fatty acids and low in saturated fats, salmon decreases the risk of abnormal heartbeats and slows the growth of plaque in arteries.

Dark chocolate: Finally, a guilty pleasure that shouldn’t make you feel so guilty! In moderation, chocolate is a great source of flavonoids, which provide powerful antioxidants and immune-system benefits.

Nuts and seeds: These superfoods provide protein and healthy unsaturated fats. Great choices include unsalted almonds, peanuts and pistachios.

Sticking to a new diet can be difficult. With proper planning and a commitment to healthy eating, these delicious foods will soon become powerful weapons against heart disease.

Is Your Lifestyle Inviting a Stroke?

The relationship between human hearts and brains is incredibly powerful. The two organs heavily rely on each other to keep everything operating efficiently. While a stroke affects the brain, it can be directly caused by a poorly functioning heart.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, states someone in the United States has a stroke every 40 seconds. Every four minutes, someone dies. Most strokes occur when a blood vessel that feeds the brain becomes blocked or bursts. Heart disease and abnormal heart rhythms are serious risk factors.

Are you living a lifestyle that supports a healthy heart and reduces your risk of stroke?

ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

While the American Heart Association suggests moderate alcohol use does have some health benefits, when you abuse it, you're inviting serious risk of a stroke.

Moderation means no more than two drinks a day for men, and one drink a day for women.

Drinking too much alcohol has been linked to raising blood pressure, which is one common cause of stroke.

There is no moderation when it comes to smoking tobacco. According to the National Stroke Association, smokers face double the risk of stroke when compared to nonsmokers. To live a heart-healthy life, it's imperative to quit!



Talk to your doctor about ways to make the quitting process easier on you.

YOUR DIET

An unhealthy diet exposes you to risks of heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke. Follow these tips from the NSA when creating a diet with calorie limits:

- Less than 10 percent of calories per day from added sugars.

- Less than 2,300 mg per day of sodium.

- Less than 10 percent of calories per day from saturated fats.

Plan a well-balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables, lean meats and low-fat dairy.

GET MOVING

The CDC shows a direct risk of stroke from being overweight or obese.

Maintaining your weight is easy once you add physical activity to your daily life.

The Surgeon General recommends two hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity each week. Moderate intensity means, brisk walking, jogging or even swimming. Mix in fun, social activities to make exercising easier all while keeping your ticker strong.

Small Changes, Big Impact

Gaining control over your heart health doesn't always mean a drastic overhaul of your lifestyle. There are small steps you can take to get started that ultimately lead to big benefits.

Getting rid of unhealthy habits can take time. By slowly introducing healthy behaviors, you will soon feel the results that inspire you to keep going. It is a good idea to meet with your doctor to tell them your plan of boosting heart health. Understanding your risk factors can determine the urgency in which you act.

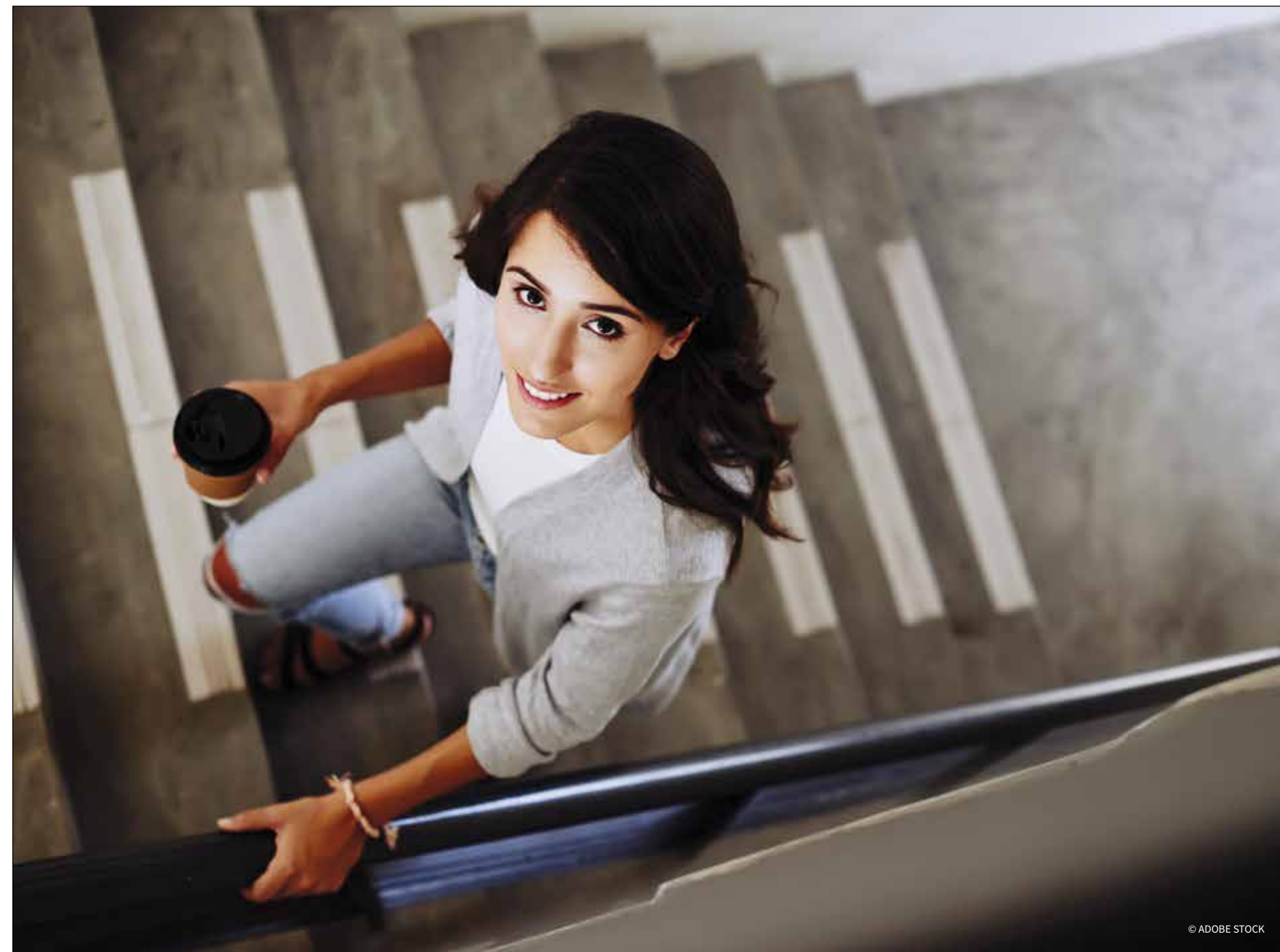
For those who are not at high risk or already living with heart disease, consider incorporating these small changes into your daily life.

FIND EXCUSES FOR EXERCISE

Sometimes, it's easy to put off exercise and blame it on your busy lifestyle. The good news is increasing your heart rate doesn't have to mean setting aside the time for a dedicated workout.

Instead, find moments in your daily life to get your blood pumping and benefit your heart health. Here are some ideas:

- **Walk on your lunch**



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break. The beautiful spring weather makes it easy for people to get outside and move! On workdays, pack a light, healthy lunch that can be easily consumed, allowing yourself time to go outside for a brisk walk.

- **Park far from entrances.** When searching for a parking

space, try and park as far from an entrance as you can. The extra steps can quickly build up over time, improving your cardiovascular health.

- **Skip dessert:** If your family typically shares dessert after dinner, replace it with a group walk! The extra time you share will be far more rewarding

than a sugary treat.

BE MINDFUL OF CALORIES

Commit to limiting your calories and stick to the designated number you're allowing! Cutting the amount you consume will lead to weight loss and positively change your

eating habits.

A good rule to stick by is to avoid drinking calories. Instead of enjoying a sugary drink with dinner, have an extra serving of vegetables or lean meats. Training yourself to use the limited calories to boost health is a great habit to start.

Heart Health Starts in Childhood

While some children are born with heart defects, the majority develop the risk. Ensure that your little ones are aware of the serious dangers associated with a lifestyle that doesn't support heart health.

A congenital heart defect is a form a cardiovascular disease that is present at birth. According to the American Heart Association, approximately 32,000 babies are expected to be born with this condition each year.

New treatments and technology is making it possible for these children to live longer and healthier lives than ever before. But for most children, prevention is the key to avoiding heart disease.

AHA: LIFE'S SIMPLE 7 CAMPAIGN

For parents, it is our responsibility to instill healthy habits in our children. Following this campaign from the American Heart Association is a great way to teach the youth.

The organization encourages you to share these seven small promises with the kids in your life to ensure they know how to promote their cardiovascular health:

1. Avoid smoking and using tobacco products.
2. Be physically active every day.
3. Eat a heart-healthy diet.
4. Keep a healthy weight.
5. Keep your blood pressure healthy.
6. Keep your total cholesterol healthy.
7. Keep your blood sugar healthy.

By promising to live by these guidelines, your child will significantly lessen the risks of



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developing heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

ALARMING TRENDS IN CHILDREN

When a child grows up with unhealthy lifestyle habits, it can be difficult to overcome them as they age. Make sure you are providing healthy food options, encouraging exercise

and setting a good example by not smoking.

The AHA reports these startling trends found in teenagers:

- Children who have cardiovascular disease risk factors at age 13 can develop heart disease as young adults.
- Children who have cardiovascular disease in their early

teens may have hardened arteries, like much older adults.

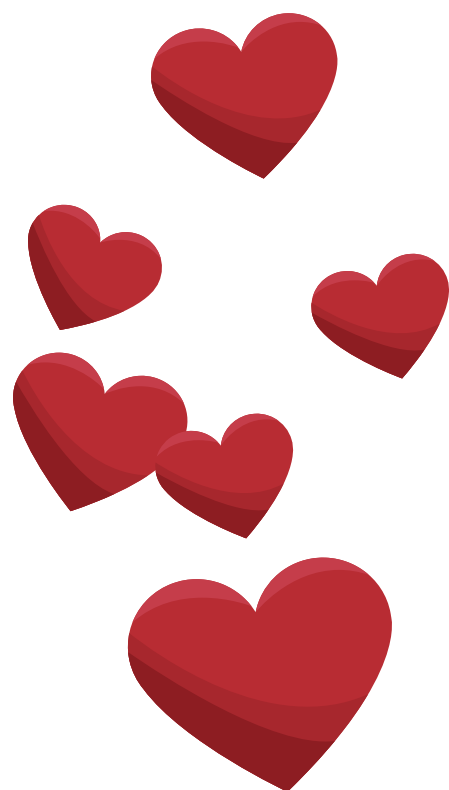
TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT TOBACCO

One of the hardest habits to kick is smoking, it is also a primary contributor in many different diseases. It's important to be direct with your children

about the subject to convince them to avoid this costly – and deadly – habit.

Together, create a plan of action if the topic of trying cigarettes comes up. Young children are often exposed to peer pressure, so preparing for it is important. Practice how to say no if a peer tries to bring smoking into your child's life.

Fundraising for Heart Health



Spreading awareness about heart health is a great way to involve your community. Why not dedicate your time to education, raising money and enhancing lives?

CHOOSING WHERE TO DONATE

Before holding your fundraiser, you'll want to decide which charity your efforts will impact. Be sure to donate to a heart-healthy cause.

Here are a few different ideas to consider during the planning of your fundraiser.

- **The American Heart Association:** For a national donation, the AHA is a great organization in the fight against the nation's No. 1 killer: heart disease. Donations impact research efforts, education and advocating for better health.

- **A children's hospital:** Check with a hospital's fundraising team to find out how to share the donations from your event. Your efforts will help efforts in research of congenital heart defects, treatments and even make a child's stay more comforting.

- **A local food bank:** Diet plays an important role in heart health, and those who rely on food banks may not always have access to nutritious foods. When you donate to a food bank, you'll support their efforts in providing healthy options for those in need.

SPREADING THE WORD

Today's technology makes it easy to advertise your fundraiser.

Post it on highly visible social media sites and encourage people to spread the word.

Another way to get people interested is to create an attractive flyer and display it in heavily trafficked areas like a grocery store, a public library or even a busy intersections. Always ask for permission from a city official before placing an advertisement on their property.

IDEAS FOR FUNDRAISER

You have many options when deciding which type of fundraiser to hold. Make sure to choose something fun for the community so the event will draw a lot of attention. Here are some great ideas from the American Heart Association.

- **Heart walk:** Plan and organized walk and have participants recruit sponsors to donate towards their efforts.

- **Silent auction:** Ask local vendors for donations for your fundraiser and invite your community to bid on them. Some awesome ideas are a gym membership, gift certificates or even movie tickets. This not only raises money for an important cause but boosts your local economy.

- **Tribute donations:** Invite your community to make contributions in honor of a loved one who was affected by heart disease.