

Your Care Instructions

Heart disease occurs when a substance called plaque builds up in the vessels that supply oxygen-rich blood to your heart. This can narrow the blood vessels and reduce blood flow. A heart attack happens when blood flow is completely blocked. A high-fat diet, smoking, and other factors increase the risk of heart disease.

Your doctor has found that you have a chance of having heart disease. You can do lots of things to keep your heart healthy. It may not be easy, but you can change your diet, exercise more and quit smoking. These steps really work to lower your chance of heart disease.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor or nurse call line if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Diet

- Use less salt when you cook and eat. This helps lower your blood pressure. Taste food before salting. Add only a little salt when you think you need it. With time, your taste buds will adjust to less salt.
- Eat fewer snack items, fast foods, canned soups, and other high-salt, high-fat, processed foods.
- Read food labels and try to avoid saturated and trans fats. They increase your risk of heart disease by raising cholesterol levels.
- Limit the amount of solid-fat butter, margarine and shortening-you eat. Use olive, peanut, or canola oil when you cook. Bake, broil and steam foods instead of frying them.
- Eating fish can lower your risk for heart disease. Eat at least 2 servings of fish a week. Salmon, mackerel, herring, sardines, and chunk light tuna are very good choices. These fish contain omega-3 fatty acids.
- Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables every day. Dark green, deep orange, red, or yellow fruits and vegetables are especially good for you. Examples include spinach, carrots, peaches and berries.
- Foods high in fibre can reduce your cholesterol and provide important vitamins and minerals. High-fibre foods include whole-grain cereals and breads, oatmeal, beans, brown rice, citrus fruits and apples.
- Limit drinks and foods with added sugar. These include candy, desserts and soda pop.

Lifestyle changes

- If your doctor recommends it, get more exercise. Walking is a good choice. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk every day. Try for at least 2½ hours a week. You also may want to swim, bike, or do other activities.
- Do not smoke. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good. Quitting smoking may be the most important step you can take to protect your heart. It is never too late to quit. You will get health benefits right away.
- Limit alcohol to three drinks a day for men and two drinks a day for women. Too much alcohol can cause health problems.

Medicines

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor or nurse call line if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- If your doctor recommends aspirin, take the amount directed each day. Make sure you take aspirin and not another kind of pain reliever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol). If you take ibuprofen (such as Advil or Motrin) for other problems, take aspirin at least two hours before taking ibuprofen.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 if you have symptoms of a heart attack. These may include:

- You have chest pain or pressure. This may occur with:
 - Chest pain or pressure, or a strange feeling in the chest.
 - Sweating.
 - Shortness of breath.
 - Pain, pressure, or a strange feeling in the back, neck, jaw, or upper belly or in one or both shoulders or arms.
 - Light-headedness or sudden weakness.
 - A fast or irregular heartbeat.

After you call 911, the operator may tell you to chew one adult-strength or two to four low-dose aspirin. Wait for an ambulance. Do not try to drive yourself.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor or nurse call line if:

- You have any problems.
- You do not get better as expected.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information call Health Link at 811.

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Author: [Healthwise Staff](http://www.healthwise.org) (www.healthwise.org)

Medical Review: Adam Husney MD — Family Medicine & Martin J. Gabica MD — Family Medicine & E. Gregory Thompson MD — Internal Medicine