

HEART HEALTH

Tips for a Healthy Heart

1) **Eat right.**

Strive for a healthy weight. Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat, *trans* fat and cholesterol. Reduce the salt in your diet.

2) **Move more.**

Try to exercise 30 minutes most or all days of the week.

3) **Don't smoke.**

If you smoke, quit. Ask your doctor about medicines to help you quit. Call Smoker's Helpline at **1-800-662-8887** for help with a "stop smoking" plan.

4) **Know your numbers.**

Make sure you visit your doctor on a regular basis. Ask about your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose. Make a plan with your doctor if needed to improve your numbers.

5) **Take medications as ordered.**

Keep a list of all your medications. Share the list with each doctor you see. Try organizing your medicines with a pill box.

6) **Learn More.**

Talk to your doctor about your concerns. You can learn more online at **www.heart.org**. The Alliance also has many handouts on heart disease.

- ◆ High Blood Pressure
- ◆ Cholesterol
- ◆ Coronary Artery Disease
- ◆ Heart Failure
- ◆ Heart Attack
- ◆ My Medicine List



You don't have to do this alone! To find out more about heart health, call Alliance Health Programs **510-747-4577**. Toll-free 1-877-932-2738; TTY: 711 or 1-800-735-2929 or online at **www.alamedaalliance.org**.

Eat Less Salt

Salt (sodium) is found in most foods. Too much salt is not good for your health. Most of the salt we eat comes from

Processed Foods: bacon, sausage, lunch meats, cheese, chips, crackers, frozen dinners

Prepared Foods: fast food, restaurant food

Canned foods: soups, vegetables, beans, pickles, meats

Seasoning: salt, soy sauce, steak sauce, seasoning blends, bouillon, fish sauce, salad dressing



Why is too much salt bad for me?

Too much sodium can cause high blood pressure (hypertension). High blood pressure can cause:

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Eye problems
- Kidney/ Liver damage

To eat less salt

Choose more of:

- Fresh or frozen vegetables and fruit
- Salt-free or low sodium foods
- Low-fat dairy products (yogurt and milk)
- Fresh herbs or garlic
- Low-sodium seasoning blends
- Lemon juice and Vinegar

Eat less of:

- Snack foods
- Processed cheeses and meats
- Fast food

Use less of:

- Salt in recipes
- Garlic/Onion salt
- Soy sauce
- Steak sauce and meat tenderizers



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HEART HEALTH

High Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the force put on the walls of the blood vessels with each heartbeat. Blood pressure helps move blood through your body.

Taking Your Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is often checked by putting a wide band called a cuff around your upper arm. Air is pumped into the cuff. Your blood pressure is measured as the air is let out of the cuff.

Blood pressure is one number over a second number.

- The top number is higher and is called the systolic reading. It is the pressure in the blood vessels when the heart pumps.
- The bottom number is lower and is called the diastolic reading. It is the pressure in the blood vessels when the heart rests between beats.



Normal Blood Pressure

Normal blood pressure is a top number less than 120 (systolic) and a bottom number less than 80 (diastolic). Blood pressure varies from person to person. Each person's blood pressure changes from hour to hour and from day to day.

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is also called hypertension. High blood pressure is 130 or higher over 80 or higher. A diagnosis of high blood pressure is not made until your blood pressure is checked several times and it stays high.

The harder it is for blood to flow through your blood vessels, the higher your blood pressure numbers. With high blood pressure, your heart is working harder than normal. High blood pressure can lead to heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, and hardening of the blood vessels.

Signs of High Blood Pressure

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have it checked. Most people do not have any signs. Some people may have a headache or blurred vision.

Your Care

Blood pressure control is very important. If you have high blood pressure you should:

- Check your blood pressure often. Call your doctor if your blood pressure stays high.
- See your doctor as scheduled.
- Take your blood pressure medicine as ordered by your doctor.
- Take your medicine even if you feel well or your blood pressure is normal.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Limit salt in your food and drinks.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Stop smoking or tobacco use.
- Exercise most every day.
- Reduce stress.
- Practice relaxation daily



Call 911 right away if you have:

- A severe headache
- Vision changes
- Chest pain, pressure or tightness
- Have a hard time breathing or get short of breath
- Sudden numbness, tingling or weakness in the face, arm or leg
- Sudden confusion, trouble understanding or trouble speaking
- Trouble swallowing

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

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Toll-free 1-877-932-2738; CRS/TTY: 711 or 1-800-735-2929 or online at www.alamedaalliance.org.



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HEART HEALTH

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fatty substance that your body needs to work. It is made in the liver and found in food that comes from animals, such as meat, eggs, milk products, butter and lard.

Too much cholesterol in your blood can be harmful to your body. It also increases your risk for heart disease. You are at risk for high blood cholesterol if:

- Your body makes too much cholesterol
- You eat food high in saturated fats and cholesterol
- You have diabetes, low thyroid level called hypothyroidism, or kidney disease

There are 3 main types of fats in your blood:

- High Density Lipoproteins (HDL): This “good” cholesterol takes extra cholesterol in your blood back to your liver so your body can get rid of it.
- Low Density Lipoproteins (LDL): This “bad” cholesterol in your blood builds up in your blood vessels. This can cause your vessels to narrow, making it hard for blood to flow.
- Triglycerides: Eating too many **carbohydrates** can increase your triglyceride level. A high triglyceride level is linked to heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Blood fats are measured by a blood test. Your results will tell you:

Your total cholesterol blood level

- A healthy level is less than 200.
- If your total cholesterol is above 200, your doctor will check your HDL, LDL and triglycerides.

Your HDL blood cholesterol level

This is the “good” cholesterol: the higher the number, the better.

- A healthy level is 60 and above.
- Talk to your doctor about treatment if your level is less than 40.



Your LDL blood cholesterol level

This is the “bad” cholesterol: the lower the number, the better.

- A healthy level is less than 100.
- Your doctor may want your LDL less than 70 if you have had a recent heart problem.
- Talk to your doctor about treatment if your level is 130 and above.

Your triglyceride blood level

- A healthy level is less than 150.
- Talk to your doctor about treatment if your level is 200 and above.

To lower your blood cholesterol levels:

- See your doctor and get your cholesterol checked regularly.
- Talk to your doctor, nurse or dietitian about a diet and exercise plan.
- Medicine may be needed if diet and exercise are not enough.
- Eat plenty of high fiber food, such as whole grains, beans, and fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Limit food that contains high amounts of cholesterol and saturated and polyunsaturated fats, such as beef, pork, cheese, whole milk or lard.
- Eat more low fat foods, such as skinless chicken breasts, fish or skim milk.
- Choose foods high in mono-saturated fats, such as olive or canola oils and nuts.
- Bake, broil, grill or roast foods rather than fry them.



Talk to your doctor, nurse or dietitian about how to manage your cholesterol levels.

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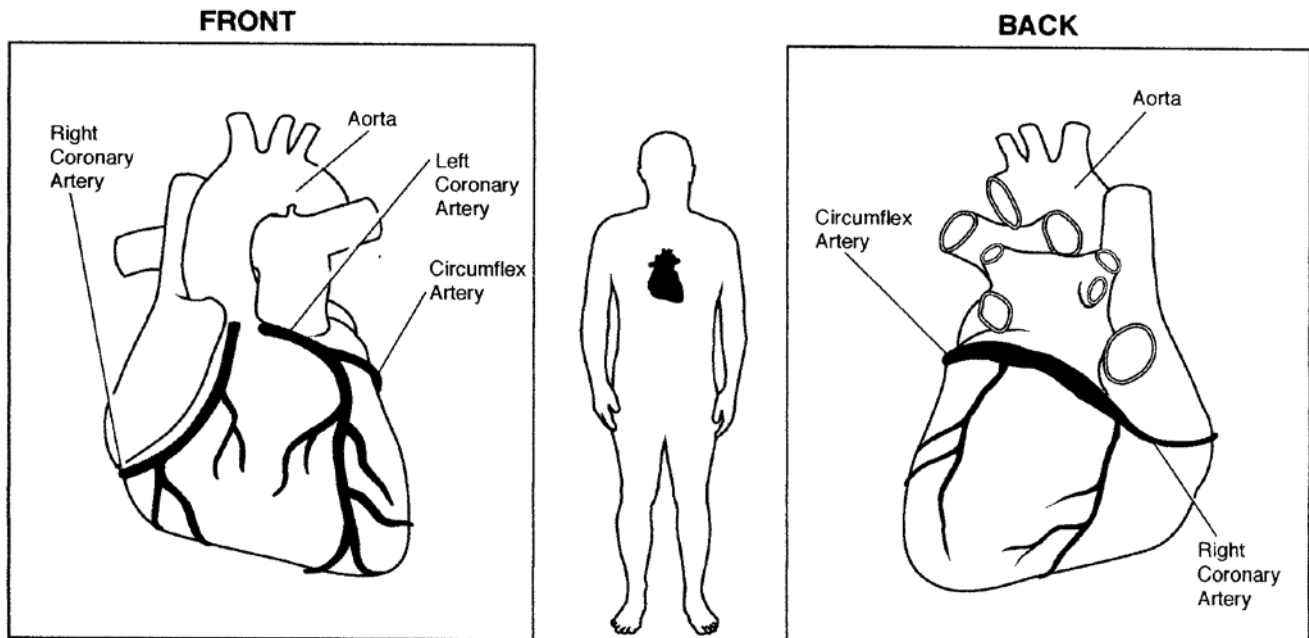
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HEART HEALTH

Coronary Artery Disease (CAD)

Coronary artery disease is also called heart disease or atherosclerosis. It is caused by the build up of fatty deposits called plaque in the blood vessels of the heart.

The heart must get oxygen and nutrients to work well. Blood carries the oxygen and nutrients to the heart through the blood vessels called arteries. As the plaque builds up in the blood vessels, blood flow to the heart muscle is decreased. When blood flow is decreased, chest pain (angina), shortness of breath, or other signs may occur. If the blood flow is stopped or blocked, it causes a heart attack.



Signs of Coronary Artery Disease

You may not have any signs or you may have:

- Pain or pressure in your chest, arm, jaw, shoulders or neck also called angina. It may spread from one place to another.
- Feeling of tightness, heaviness, squeezing or burning
- Sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Abdominal pain
- Feeling very tired, dizzy or faint

Call 911 if you have any of these signs.

Risk Factors

You are at higher risk for getting coronary artery disease if you:

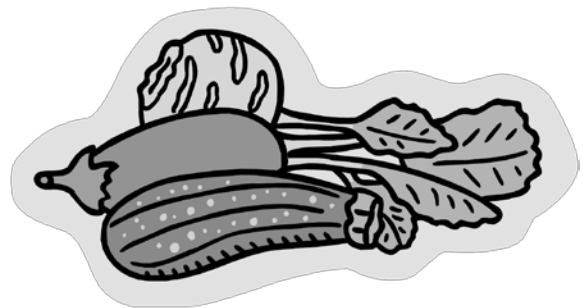
- Have a family history of the disease
- Have high cholesterol, diabetes or high blood pressure
- Smoke or use tobacco
- Are inactive
- Have stress
- Are overweight, especially around the belly
- Drink too much alcohol
- Don't eat enough fruits and vegetables each day

Changing even one risk factor can improve your heart health. You can prevent the disease from getting worse and may even help to improve it.

Your Care

The goal is to improve blood flow to your heart muscle and decrease your risk of heart attack. Treatment may include:

- Medicines
- Exercise
- A low fat diet
- Procedures or surgery
- A cardiac rehab program
- A program to quit smoking
- Help for depression



No matter what type of treatment is done, it does not “cure” the disease. You need to change your risk factors and follow your care plan. Talk to your doctor about your care or any questions you may have.

You don't have to do this alone! Alliance Health Programs can help you meet your health goals, call **510-747-4577**.

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HEART HEALTH

Heart Failure

With heart failure, also called congestive heart failure, the heart muscle is weakened and does not pump as strongly as it should. The blood flow slows and fluid can build up in your lungs or other parts of your body. This does not mean that your heart has stopped pumping blood. Because heart failure does not go away, you will need to learn how to manage your condition.

Causes of Heart Failure

- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Heart valve problems
- Lung diseases
- An infection or virus
- Heavy alcohol or drug use
- Heart problems at birth
- Thyroid or kidney disease



Your Care

- Take your medicines as ordered by your doctor.
- Weigh yourself every morning at the same time. Keep a record of your daily weights.
- Limit salt or sodium in foods and drinks.
- Call your doctor for any of the signs listed below—do not delay calling.
- Pay attention to how you are feeling.
- Exercise each day, but rest as needed.
- Put your feet up to reduce ankle swelling.
- Limit your daily liquids if ordered by your doctor.
- Keep your doctor appointments.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.

More on Your Care for Heart Failure. . .

- Stop smoking.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Get the flu vaccine each year. Talk to your doctor about the pneumonia vaccine.

Call your doctor **right away** if you:

- Gain 2 pounds or 1 kilogram in a day or 3 to 5 pounds or 1 to 2 kilograms in 5 days
- Have swelling in your legs, feet, hands or abdomen or feel that your shoes, waistband or rings are tighter
- Feel short of breath
- Use more pillows when you sleep or need to sleep in a chair
- Cough at night or have increased cough or chest congestion
- Are more tired or weak
- Have a poor appetite or nausea
- Feel dizzy or confused
- Urinate less often

Call 911 **right away** if you:

- Feel short of breath even with rest
- Have chest pain, pressure or tightness
- Faint
- Have rapid, irregular heartbeats

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

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Heart Health

Heart Attack

A heart attack is also called a myocardial infarction or MI. It occurs when a blood vessel that provides the heart muscle with oxygen becomes blocked, stopping blood flow to a part of the heart. If treatment is not done right away, part of the heart muscle dies. The sooner you get help, the less damage you will have to your heart.

Blockage in the blood vessel may occur from:

- Fatty deposits called plaque
- A blood clot
- A spasm in the blood vessel

Signs of a Heart Attack

- Pain, pressure, tightness, heaviness, squeezing or burning in your chest, arm, jaw, shoulders or neck
- Occurs both during activity and at rest
- Lasts for more than 5 minutes or goes away then comes back
- Sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomach pain or heartburn
- Feeling very tired, dizzy or faint
- Feeling scared or panicked

Call 911 **right away** if you have any of these signs. Sit or lie down until the emergency team arrives. **Do not drive to the hospital or delay by calling your doctor.**

Some people, especially women and diabetics, may not have the same signs, like chest pain. Or they may have very mild signs. The more signs you have, the more likely you are having a heart attack.

If you had a heart attack before, you may have different signs with a second heart attack. **Do not ignore your signs.** Call for help quickly to limit damage to your heart.

Your Care at the Hospital

Tests will be done to see if you had a heart attack and if there was damage to your heart. You may be in the hospital for a few days. You may be started on medicines and have treatments to improve the blood flow to your heart.

Discharge Instructions after a Heart Attack

1. Go to your follow-up doctor's appointment.
2. Ask about getting into a cardiac rehab program.
3. **Limit your activity for 4 to 6 weeks.**
 - ✓ Rest each day.
 - ✓ Increase your activity over time.
 - ✓ Rest for 1 hour after eating meals and at least 30 minutes after activities such as bathing, showering or shaving.
 - ✓ Limit stair climbing. Take the stairs slowly.
 - ✓ Avoid lifting more than 10 pounds or 4.5 kilograms.
 - ✓ **Do not** vacuum; mow grass, rake or shovel. You may do light housework.
 - ✓ Ask your doctor when you can drive and when you can return to work. Talk to your doctor about any limits if you plan to travel.
 - ✓ Sexual activity may be resumed when you are able to walk up 20 stairs without any problems. Talk to your doctor first.
4. Follow the diet your doctor and dietitian suggest.
 - ✓ Eat foods that are low in fat.
 - ✓ Avoid salty foods.
5. Weigh yourself each day to check for fluid build-up. Extra fluid makes your heart work harder. Call your doctor if you gain 2 to 3 pounds or 1 kilogram overnight.



6. Avoid temperatures that are very hot or very cold.
 - ✓ Do not take hot or cold showers.
 - ✓ Do not use a hot tub, spa or whirlpool.
 - ✓ Stay indoors during humid weather or very hot (higher than 80° F or 27° C) or cold (lower than 30° F or 1° C) temperatures.
7. Many people feel very sad or have changes in emotions after a heart attack. Call your doctor if this gets worse or does not go away in a few weeks.

Your doctor may give you other instructions.

Improve Your Heart Health

There are things you can do to improve your heart health.

- Do not smoke or use tobacco products and avoid other people's tobacco smoke.
- Treat high blood pressure if you have it.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes each day.
- Eat a healthy diet that has less fat, salt and sugars.
- Keep your weight in a normal range.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
- See your doctor for regular check ups and take your medicines as ordered.



Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

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