



Know your heart risk

One reason heart disease is so deadly is due to its silent nature. Often, people do not know they have heart issues until they experience a heart attack or stroke.

There's plenty of good news, though. The risk factors for heart disease are fairly easy to spot. Taking steps to understand your heart numbers and manage your risk can decrease your chance of heart disease. And even if you already have heart disease, you can improve your odds by addressing your risk factors.



NUMBERS TO KNOW

Regular check-ins with your doctor are key to monitoring heart health. Your doctor will check your blood pressure, blood lipids, and overall health to determine your heart disease risk. Here are some numbers that could signal cause for concern:

- Blood pressure equal to or higher than 130/80 mm/Hg
- Total blood cholesterol ≥ 200 mg/dL
- LDL cholesterol ≥ 100 mg/dL
- HDL cholesterol less than 40 mg/dL for men and 50 mg/dL for women
- Fasting blood sugar equal to or higher than 100 mg/dL
- Waist circumference greater than 40 inches for men and 35 inches for women

HABITS THAT PUT YOU AT RISK

While the numbers your doctor tests for can indicate your heart disease risk, they are not the only factors to watch out for. Your lifestyle habits can tell you a lot about the health of your heart. Here are some habits that can increase your risk:

- Smoking
- Drinking more than 1 drink a day for women or 2 drinks a day for men
- Eating too much salty food
- Not eating enough fruits and vegetables
- Consuming a diet high in red meat and processed foods
- Being sedentary, or getting less than 150 minutes of exercise a week

WHAT TO DO NEXT

If any of these risk factors apply to you, talk to your doctor about your heart health. A long and healthy life requires a healthy heart.

There are many effective treatments for heart disease, but the best plan is prevention. Taking steps to address your risk factors can make all the difference. Your doctor may recommend:

- Changes to your diet
- More exercise
- Cutting back on alcohol
- Quitting smoking
- Getting more sleep
- Medication