

The Heart of the Matter

Extremely Important Tip: A healthy heart is essential to your well-being.

Okay, you probably already knew that. But one cannot overstate the difference a well-functioning ticker makes to your overall health. And not just physical wellness, either... chronic heart disease can also lead to anxiety or depression, and vice versa.

Each year, heart disease and stroke are responsible for an estimated 17 million deaths worldwide. In the U.S., one out of every three deaths is tied to heart disease, and nearly half of adults have some form of cardiovascular disease, including stroke, heart failure and high blood pressure.

But there is good news: Good heart health is a fairly common-sense endeavour. Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains, exercise regularly, minimize stress, and get at least eight hours of sleep every night. And for you smokers out there, please don't think that so-called "e-cigarettes" are a smart substitute for the real thing – early research suggests that vaping can also increase your risk of stroke or heart attack.

In addition to healthy lifestyle choices, your best bet for keeping your heart in the pink (red?) is to visit your family doctor every year. During your annual wellness exam, the physician will monitor your heart activity and run tests to ensure that your blood pressure and cholesterol are at heart-healthy levels.



Testing, Testing...

Your doctor may use some or all of these screening tests to monitor your heart health.

- **Blood Pressure.** Because high blood pressure usually has no symptoms, it can't be detected without being measured. BP numbers of less than 120/80 mm Hg are considered within the normal range.
- **Fasting Lipoprotein Profile.** This blood test measures total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol and HDL (good) cholesterol.
- **Body Weight.** Being obese puts you at higher risk for heart health problems.
- **Blood Glucose.** High blood glucose levels raise your risk of developing insulin resistance and diabetes.
- **Smoking, Physical Activity, Diet.** Your doctor will discuss these topics and offer helpful suggestions when needed.

SOURCE: American Heart Association