



## 7 STEPS TO HEART HEALTH

By Mohamed Shalaby, M.D.

**The American Heart Association has revised its guidelines for achieving optimal heart health. Here are seven things you can do to reach that goal:**

**1. Get Moving for Heart Health.** Regular physical activity lowers blood pressure, increases HDL (“good”) cholesterol levels, keeps blood sugar in check, and helps you control your weight.

**2. Eat a Healthy Diet for Heart Health.** A heart-healthy diet includes:

- At least 4-1/2 cups of fresh fruit and vegetables per day.
- At least two 3.5-oz. servings of fish per week. Choose fish that contain omega-3 fats, like salmon, mackerel, and sardines.
- At least three 1-oz. servings of whole-grain products that are high in fiber.
- Less than 36 oz. of sugar-sweetened beverages per week (that’s less than three 12-oz cans of soda).
- No more than two servings of processed meats per week.
- No more than 1,500 mg. of sodium per day.

**3. Control Cholesterol for Heart Health.** A total blood cholesterol level of 200 mg/dL or higher puts you at risk.

**4. Manage Your Blood Pressure for Heart Health.** High blood pressure is the single most significant risk factor for heart disease. Your blood pressure should be below 120/80 mm Hg.

**5. Maintain a Healthy BMI for Heart Health.** Body mass index (BMI) assesses your body weight relative to your height and indicates your level of body fat. An ideal BMI is lower than 25.

**6. Stop Smoking for Heart Health.** Smoking by itself increases the risk of coronary heart disease. When it acts with the other factors, it greatly increases your risk from those factors, too.

**7. Reduce Blood Glucose for Heart Health.** Adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have heart disease or a stroke. If your fasting blood glucose level falls between 100 mg/dL and 125 mg/dL—weight loss can help get your blood glucose down. ●

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