



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. ●

Dr. Mohamed Shalaby is a nationally recognized board certified and fellowship trained cardiologist with 20 years of experience in cardiovascular medicine. For more information or to consult with Dr. Shalaby, visit his website, www.drshalaby.com or call 281.956.7070.