

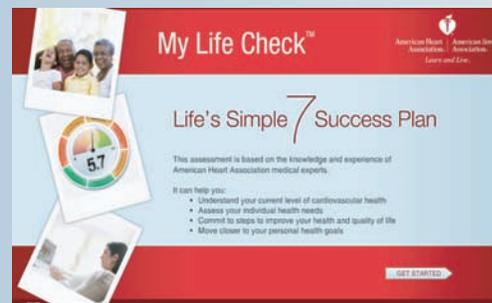
The 2020 Impact Goal

By 2020, to improve the cardiovascular health of all Americans by 20 percent while reducing deaths from cardiovascular diseases and stroke by 20 percent.

My Life Check

This tool is based on the latest cardiovascular science interpreted by American Heart Association medical experts. It will help a person assess their individual needs and develop unique steps to change their behavior and move closer to their individual health goals.

- Answer 18 questions about “Life’s Simple 7” health factors and health behaviors. These include cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar, smoking status, weight, physical activity and diet.
- Get a heart score: Overall cardiovascular health is assigned a number from 1 to 10 based on information you supply.
- Create an action plan: Seven simple action plans are available.



Life’s Simple 7

For the first time, the American Heart Association has defined what it means to have ideal cardiovascular health, identifying seven health and behavior factors that impact health and quality of life. We know that even simple, small changes can make a big difference in living a better life. Known as “Life’s Simple 7,” these steps can help add years to your life:

- Stop smoking
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Engage in regular physical activity
- Eat a healthy diet
- Manage blood pressure
- Take charge of cholesterol
- Keep blood sugar, or glucose, at healthy levels



Take Action!

- **Take the My Life Check Assessment.** Go to <http://mylifecheck.heart.org> for your personalized health assessment.
- **Create an action plan.** Choose one of the seven simple action plans that are available on the assessment. Print it out and start working on it. Review some of the basics on the back of this sheet. Remember, small steps make a big difference.
- **Tell someone about your commitment.** Think of seven people you care about who may smoke, have high blood pressure, diabetes or a family history of heart disease and stroke. People with these risk factors are at increased risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke and may benefit from the Simple 7 Steps and the My Life Check Assessment. Send at least one health message to these seven people and encourage them to send the message on to seven other people they know.

Life's Simple 7



Get Active



Control Cholesterol



Eat Better



Manage Blood Pressure



Lose Weight



Reduce Blood Sugar



Stop Smoking

Get Active

Finding time for exercise in our overscheduled lives is a challenge for all busy Americans. Especially for those who are parents or are working full-time or both. But the benefits far outweigh the sacrifices. The facts are clear: by exercising for as little as 30 minutes each day you can reduce your risk of heart disease. Without regular physical activity, the body slowly loses its strength and ability to function well. Physical activity = living a longer, healthier life.

American Heart Association Guidelines

We suggest at least 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise or 75 minutes per week of vigorous exercise – or a combination of moderate and vigorous. Physical activity is anything that makes you move your body and burns calories, such as climbing stairs or playing sports. Aerobic exercises benefit your heart, such as walking, jogging, swimming or biking. Strength and stretching exercises are best for overall stamina and flexibility.

Control Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like, waxy substance found in the bloodstream and in all your body's cells. It's normal to have cholesterol. Cholesterol is an important part of a healthy body because it's used for producing cell membranes and some hormones, and serves other needed bodily functions. But too much cholesterol in the blood is a major risk factor for coronary heart disease (which leads to heart attack) and for stroke.

American Heart Association Recommendations

It's important for all people to know their cholesterol level. Total blood cholesterol is the most common measurement of blood cholesterol. It's the number you receive as test results. Cholesterol is measured in milligrams per deciliter of blood (mg/dL). A cholesterol level of 200 mg/dL or higher puts you in a high-risk category and is cause to take action.

Eat Better

The simplest, positive change you can make to effectively improve your heart health is to start walking. It's enjoyable, free, easy, social and great exercise. Check out the Start Walking program to get going with expert advice. (startwalkingnow.org)

A healthy diet and lifestyle are your best weapons to fight cardiovascular disease. However, there are a lot of mixed messages and myths out there regarding healthy eating. It's not surprising that a lot of us are confused about the different types of fats. We have lots of questions regarding sodium and meat and dairy. With all the differing opinions, it's best to get informed from credible sources, so you can make smart choices in your diet for long-term benefits to your heart and health. It's the overall pattern of your choices that counts most. Head to the American Heart Association Nutrition Center for guidelines and suggestions (americanheart.org/nutrition)

Manage Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is the single most significant risk factor for heart disease. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can injure or kill you. It's sometimes called "the silent killer" because it has no symptoms. Blockages and blood clots mean less blood can get to our vital organs, and without blood, the tissue dies.

That's why high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, kidney failure, and even heart failure.

American Heart Association Guidelines

While there is no cure, high blood pressure is manageable. Even if your blood pressure is normal (less than 120 mm Hg systolic AND less than 80 mm Hg diastolic) and your goal is prevention only, lifestyle modifications provide a prescription for healthy living. These changes may reduce your blood pressure without the use of prescription medications: eating a heart-healthy diet, which may include reducing salt; enjoying regular physical activity; maintaining a healthy weight; managing stress; limiting alcohol; avoiding tobacco smoke.

Lose Weight

Among Americans age 20 and older, 145 million are overweight or obese (BMI of 25.0 kg/m² and higher). That's 76.9 million men and 68.1 million women. This is of great concern especially since obesity is now recognized as a major, independent risk factor for heart disease. If you have too much fat — especially if a lot of it is at your waist — you're at higher risk for such health problems as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes.

If you're overweight or obese, you can reduce your risk for heart disease by successfully losing weight and keeping it off. When coming up with a fitness and nutrition plan to lose weight, it's crucial to understand your recommended calorie intake. And then the amount of food calories you're consuming verses the energy calories you're burning off with different levels of physical activity. It's a matter of balancing healthy eating (caloric energy) with the (molecular) energy that leaves your body through a healthy level of exercise.

Reduce Blood Sugar

The American Heart Association considers diabetes one of the six major controllable risk factors for cardiovascular disease. In fact, adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have heart disease or a stroke than adults without diabetes. Diabetes is treatable but even when glucose levels are under control it greatly increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. In fact, most people with diabetes die of some form of heart or blood vessel disease.

American Heart Association Guidelines

When diabetes is detected, a doctor may prescribe changes in eating habits, weight control, exercise programs and medication to keep it in check. It's critical for people with diabetes to have regular check-ups. Work closely with your healthcare provider to manage your diabetes and control any other risk factors. For example, blood pressure for people with diabetes should be lower than 130/80 mm Hg.

Impact of Smoking on Health

Smoking is the most important preventable cause of premature death in the United States. Smokers have a higher risk of developing many chronic disorders, including atherosclerosis — the buildup of fatty substances in the arteries — which can lead to coronary heart disease, heart attack (myocardial infarction) and stroke. Controlling or reversing atherosclerosis is an important part of preventing future heart attack or stroke.