

Simple, daily steps can reduce risk of heart disease, experts say

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February is American Heart Month, a perfect time to remind people that small steps can reduce their risk of heart disease, the No. 1 killer of men and women. Mayo Clinic cardiologists offer several simple tips to reduce the risk.

"When I tell people that almost 80 percent of heart disease is preventable, they are surprised," says Mayo cardiologist Martha Grogan, M.D., medical editor-in-chief of Mayo Clinic [Healthy Heart](#) for Life! "Better yet, there are daily things we all can do that can make a big difference in our effort to keep our hearts healthy."

For example, Dr. Grogan encourages people to move 10 extra minutes each day. A [sedentary lifestyle](#) may increase your risk of heart attack almost as much as smoking does, recent studies show. Each day, make an effort to get up from your desk to go talk to a colleague instead of sending an email, or walk around the house as you are talking on the phone, she recommends.

"Moving even 10 minutes a day for someone who's been sedentary may reduce the risk for heart disease by 50 percent," Dr. Grogan says.

Americans too often cheat themselves of sleep and their hearts can pay the price, says Virend Somers, M.D., Ph.D., a Mayo Clinic cardiologist and sleep expert. [Chronic sleep deprivation](#) can increase the risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes and depression. "Sleep is a necessity, like food and water. It's not a luxury," he says.

Changes can make a difference, says Randal Thomas, M.D., a Mayo preventive cardiologist. For example, a 53-year-old male smoker with high blood pressure has a 20 percent chance of having a heart attack over the next 10 years. If he stops smoking, his risk drops to 10 percent; if he takes [high blood pressure](#) medicine, it falls to 5 percent.

"There's a saying that heart disease is what nature gives you for breaking its rules. But you have a second chance. Healthy [lifestyle habits](#) can help you reduce a majority of your risks for heart attack," Dr. Thomas says.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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