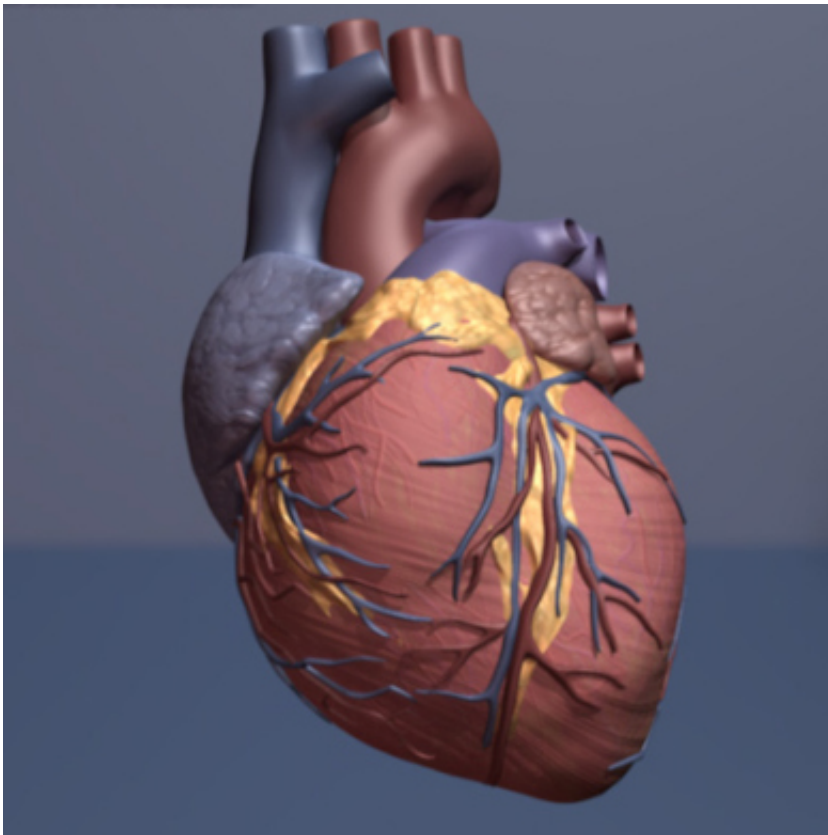


Seven healthy heart measures may reduce heart failure risk

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Human heart. Credit: copyright American Heart Association

People scoring well on the American Heart Association's Life's Simple 7 checklist for a healthy heart are less likely to develop heart failure, a condition that reduces blood and oxygen flow to the body, according to new research in the American Heart Association's journal *Circulation*:

Heart Failure.

Life's Simple 7 encompasses seven measures that people can use to rate their [heart health](#) and take steps to improve it. The measures are: manage blood pressure, control cholesterol, reduce blood sugar, get physically active, eat better, lose weight and stop smoking.

Researchers analyzed data from the Framingham Offspring Study. To evaluate the association between the Simple 7 and heart failure, they followed 3,201 participants, average age 59, for up to 12.3 years. During that time, 188 participants developed heart failure.

Researchers found for each one-point higher cardiovascular health score, there was a 23 percent lower risk of developing heart failure. Those scoring in the middle third cut their risk of heart failure nearly in half compared to those in the bottom third. Those in the top third reduced their risk even further.

"Even though there is awareness about the importance of a [healthy lifestyle](#), many people don't act on those messages," said Vanessa Xanthakis, Ph.D., senior author and assistant professor of medicine and biostatistics at Boston University. "This study points to the importance of knowing your numbers and speaking to your doctor about improving your score on each health metric and trying to get as close to ideal status as possible."

Previous research has shown that improvements in these measures reduce the risk of [heart attack](#) and stroke. According to the American Heart Association's Statistical Update, at 40 years of age, men and women have a 1 in 5 chance of developing heart failure during their lifetime.

Researchers also found an association between poor heart health

measures and unhealthy changes in the heart's structure and function, known as cardiac remodeling. These changes, measured at the beginning of the study, appeared to put people at greater risk for heart failure later in life. However, after adjusting for cardiac remodeling, low scores in the seven heart health factors remained predictors of heart failure.

Authors noted two limitations of the study: most participants were white and of European ancestry, and their Life's Simple 7 score was assessed only once, at the beginning of the study.

The message of the study for patients was nevertheless strong, said Matthew Naylor, M.D., lead author and a cardiology fellow at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts. "This is a useful metric for a healthy lifestyle that may not only help you reduce your chances of heart attack and stroke, but also of developing [heart failure](#) in the future."

Provided by American Heart Association

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