

Your best bet against heart attack, stroke? Lower blood pressure

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(HealthDay)—Millions of Americans with high blood pressure are at

risk of heart attack and stroke, but just a few changes might cut that risk.

"In February, American Heart Month, we encourage all Americans to take control of their heart health by better understanding and monitoring their [blood pressure levels](#) and making healthy lifestyle changes that can significantly reduce their risk of serious health consequences associated with high blood pressure," said Dr. Patrice Harris, president of the American Medical Association (AMA).

"High blood pressure is the nation's leading risk factor for [heart attack](#) and stroke, yet an overwhelming number of U.S. adults are living with uncontrolled high blood pressure," Harris said in an association news release.

In honor of American Heart Month, the AMA provided six tips for improving heart health:

- Know your blood pressure. Understand what your numbers mean and how you can get your blood pressure under control.
- Follow a treatment plan to manage your [high blood pressure](#). Work with your doctor and commit to realistic lifestyle changes.
- Get active. Healthy adults from ages 18 to 65 should get 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week.
- Eat less processed food. Try to stay away from foods with added sodium and sugar. Instead, eat more plant-based foods and foods that are rich in potassium (these include bananas, sweet potatoes, mushrooms, avocados, greens, tomatoes).
- Keep your weight under control. If you're overweight, take steps to shed a few pounds. Being 20 or more pounds overweight can put you at risk.
- Consume alcohol in moderation, if at all. According to the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, moderation is defined by women having up to one drink per day and men up to two.

More information: The American Heart Association has more on [staying heart-healthy](#).

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