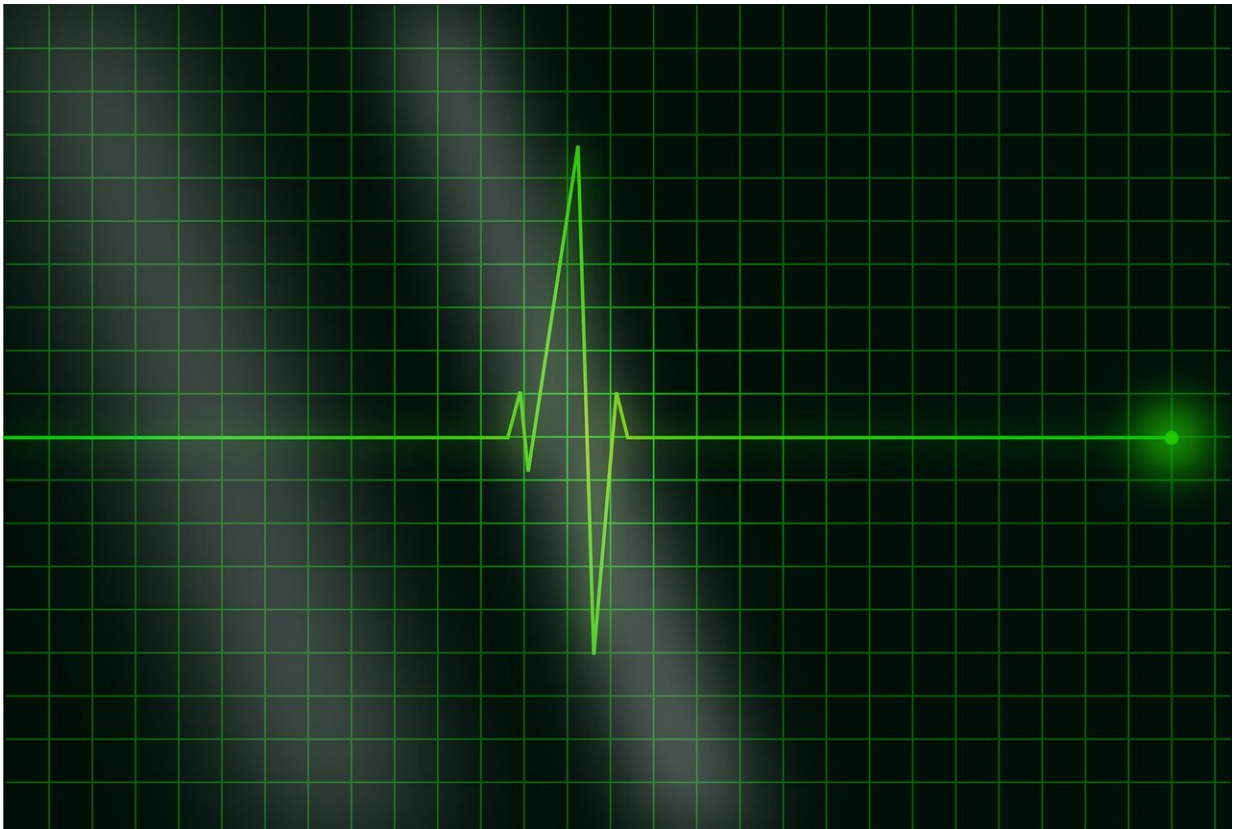


Consumer Health: 7 lifestyle strategies to prevent heart disease

February 15 2022, by Laurel Kelly



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February is American Heart Month, which makes this a good time to learn what you can do to keep your heart healthy.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the U.S., regardless of race or ethnicity, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Although you cannot change some [risk factors](#), such as family history, sex or age, you can take some key steps to reduce your risk of [heart disease](#). You can avoid [heart problems](#) in the future by adopting a healthy lifestyle today.

These seven lifestyle strategies can boost your heart health:

- Don't smoke or use tobacco. Chemicals in tobacco can damage the heart and [blood vessels](#). Cigarette smoke reduces the oxygen in the blood, which increases blood pressure and heart rate because the heart has to work harder to supply enough oxygen to the body and brain.
- Be physically active. Regular, [daily physical activity](#) can lower the risk of heart disease. Physical activity helps control your weight. It also reduces the chances of developing other conditions that may strain the heart, such as [high blood pressure](#), high cholesterol and Type 2 diabetes.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet. A healthy diet can help protect the heart, improve blood pressure and cholesterol, and reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes. Two examples of heart-healthy food plans are the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan and the Mediterranean diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight, especially around the middle of the body, increases the risk of heart disease. Excess weight can lead to conditions that increase the chances of developing heart disease, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and Type 2 diabetes.
- Get good quality sleep. People who don't get enough sleep have a higher risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes

and depression. Most adults need at least seven hours of sleep each night.

- Manage stress. Some people cope with stress in unhealthy ways, such as overeating, drinking or smoking. Finding alternative ways to manage stress, including physical activity, relaxation exercises or meditation, can improve your health.
- Get regular health screenings. High [blood pressure](#) and high cholesterol can damage the heart and blood vessels. But without testing, you probably won't know whether you have these conditions. Regular screening can tell you what your numbers are and whether you need to take action.

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