

ABCS of Heart Health CDC WEBSITE

Every year, Americans suffer more than 1.5 million heart attacks and strokes.

The good news is that you can help reduce your risk and improve your heart health by following the ABCS!

What are the **ABCS** of heart health?

Take **Aspirin** as directed by your health care professional.

Ask your health care professional if aspirin can reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Be sure to tell your health care professional if you have a family history of heart disease or stroke and mention your own medical history.

Control your **Blood pressure**.

Blood pressure measures the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries. If your blood pressure stays high for a long time, you may suffer from hypertension. High blood pressure increases your risk for heart attack or stroke more than any other risk factor. Find out what your blood pressure numbers are, and ask your health care professional what those numbers mean for your health. If you have high blood pressure, work with your health care professional to lower it.

Manage your **Cholesterol**.

Cholesterol is a waxy substance produced by the liver and found in certain foods. Your body needs cholesterol, but when you have too much, it can build up in your arteries and cause heart disease. There are different types of cholesterol: One type is "good" called HDL (high density lipoprotein) and can protect you from heart disease, but another type is "bad" called LDL (low-density lipoprotein) and can increase your risk.

TIP: To keep **HDL** and **LDL** straight, remember the **H** in HDL stands for "**Healthy**" and you want it "**Higher**" - the **L** in LDL stands for "**Lousy**" and you want it "**Lower**". The key to managing cholesterol is boosting good cholesterol and lowering bad cholesterol.

Don't **Smoke**.

Smoking raises your blood pressure, which increases your risk for heart attack and stroke. If you smoke, quit. Talk to your health care professional about ways to help you stick with your decision. It's never too late to quit smoking.

What do I need to know about high blood pressure?

High blood pressure is the leading cause of heart attack and stroke in the United States. It can also damage your eyes and kidneys. One in three American adults has high blood pressure, and only half of them have it under control.

How is blood pressure measured?

Two numbers (for example, 140/90) help determine blood pressure. The first number measures systolic pressure, which is the pressure in the blood vessels when the heart beats. The second number measures diastolic pressure, which is the pressure in the vessels when the heart rests between beats.

When should I take my blood pressure?

Take your blood pressure regularly, even if you feel fine. Generally, people with high blood pressure have no symptoms. You can take your blood pressure at home, at many pharmacies, and at your doctor's office.

How can I control my blood pressure?

Work with your health care professional to make a plan for managing your blood pressure. Be sure to follow these guidelines:

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Choose foods low in trans-fat and sodium. Everyone age 2 and up should consume less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day. Adults age 51 and older: African Americans of all ages; and people with high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease should consume even less than that: only 1,500 mg of sodium per day.
- **Get moving.** Staying physically active will help you control your weight and strengthen your heart. Try walking for 10 minutes, 3 times a day, 5 days a week.
- **Take your medication.** If you have high blood pressure, your health care professional may give you blood pressure medicine to help control it. It's important to follow your health care professional's instructions when taking the medication and keep taking it even if you feel well. Tell your health care professional if the medicine makes you feel bad. Your health care team can suggest different ways to reduce side effects or recommend another medicine that may have fewer side effects.

Who is part of my health care team?

The doctor is not the only health care professional who can help you follow the ABCS. Nurses, pharmacists, community health workers, health coaches, and other professionals can work with you and your doctor to help you achieve your health goals.