



# Better Heart Health Starts Now



## In Your 20s

- Start an exercise program, maintain a healthy diet and avoid smoking and second-hand smoke.
- Find a Primary Care Physician (PCP) and start getting annual check-ups. Your annual exam should include the following recommended screenings:



### Recommended Screenings

### How Often?

Blood pressure	All regular healthcare visits or at least once every two years if blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm Hg.
Cholesterol ("fasting lipoprotein profile" to measure total, HDL and LDL cholesterol)	Every 4-6 years for healthy individuals; more often if any you have elevated risk for heart disease and stroke.
Weight / Body Mass Index (BMI)	Annually, during your regular healthcare visit.
Waist circumference	As needed to help evaluate cardiovascular risk if your BMI is greater than or equal to 25 kg/m <sup>2</sup> .
Discuss smoking, physical activity, diet	During regular healthcare visits.

## In Your 30s



- **Know your family history.** If you have a relative with heart disease, your risk increases and more so if the relative is a parent or sibling.
- Focus on risk factors you can control by **maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly, not smoking** and **eating healthier**.
- Keep your PCP informed about any heart problems you learn about in your family.
- **Tame your stress.** Long-term stress causes an increase in heart rate and blood pressure that may damage the artery walls. Learn **stress management** techniques to keep stress under control.

## In Your 40s



- **Pay attention to your weight.** As we age, our metabolism slows and you may experience weight gain in your 40s. You can avoid weight gain by following a [heart-healthy diet](#) and getting plenty of exercise.
- Have regular blood pressure checks and other heart-health screenings.
- **Blood glucose test.** The American Diabetes Association recommends fasting glucose testing for prediabetes at age 45. This first test serves as a baseline for future tests, which you should repeat every three years. Testing may be done earlier or more often if you are overweight, or at risk of becoming diabetic.
- **Does your partner say you snore?** One in five adults have at least mild [sleep apnea](#), a condition that causes pauses in breathing during sleep. If not adequately treated, sleep apnea can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

## In Your 50s

- If you are diagnosed with [high blood pressure](#), [high cholesterol](#), [diabetes](#) or other conditions that increase your risk for heart disease or stroke, focus even more on a heart-healthy diet and consider increasing your physical activity to 20-30 minutes daily moderate activity.
- If you do have heart disease, learn the [warning signs of a heart attack and stroke](#). Now is the time to get savvy about symptoms. Not everyone experiences severe chest pain with a heart attack or sudden numbness with a stroke. Also, [heart attack symptoms in women](#) can be different from men.



## In Your 60s+



- With age comes an increased risk for heart disease. Your blood pressure, cholesterol and other heart-related numbers tend to rise. Observing your numbers and managing any health problems that arise – along with the requisite healthy eating and exercise – can help you live longer and better.
- **Have an ankle-brachial index test.** Starting in your 60s, it's a good idea to get an ankle-brachial index test as part of a physical exam. The test assesses the pulses in the feet to help diagnose [peripheral artery disease](#) (PAD), a lesser-known cardiovascular disease in which plaque builds up in the leg arteries.
- **As you age, it is essential to pay close attention to your weight** and calorie intake because you need fewer calories. Excess weight causes your heart to work harder and increases the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol. Exercising regularly and eating smaller portions of nutrient-rich foods may help you maintain a healthy weight.
- **Learn the warning signs of a heart attack and stroke.** Heart attack symptoms in women can be different from men. Knowing when you're having a heart attack or stroke means you're more likely to get immediate help. Quick treatment can save your life and prevent serious disability.

Sources:

[A guide to prevent heart disease at various ages](#)

[You can get heart disease before 50](#)

[Obesity as young adult sets the stage for heart disease, stroke](#)

Learn something new that relates to your heart health?  
Update your [Healthy Action Plan](#) as a reminder to make further improvements.