

# GO RED FOR WOMEN HEART HEALTH GUIDE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Health Risk Factors

- Cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Heart Attack and Stroke
- High Blood Pressure

### Healthy Behaviors

- Be Active
- Body Mass Index
- Healthy Eating
- Stop Smoking
- Share the Facts Self Test

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Tia  
Stroke Survivor  
Age 23

Keisha  
Heart Attack  
Age 33

# KNOW YOUR CHOLESTEROL

Most people have heard that high cholesterol is not good for you, but did you know it can increase your risk for heart disease, heart attack or stroke? In fact, about 47 percent of American adults have cholesterol levels that are too high.

Having too much cholesterol in your blood increases your risk for heart disease and stroke. This happens because cholesterol and other fats can build up, narrow arteries and then be blocked by a blood clot or other particle. This causes the heart or brain to lose its blood supply, resulting in a heart attack or stroke.

You should have your cholesterol levels checked regularly (at least once every five years starting at age 20) because with the help of your healthcare professional, high cholesterol can be controlled.

## What are your cholesterol goals?

Factor	Goal	
Total Cholesterol	Less than 200 mg/dL	
LDL (“Bad”) Cholesterol	LDL cholesterol goals vary	
	Less than 100 mg/dL	Optimal
	100 to 129 mg/dL	Near Optimal/Above Optimal
	130 to 159 mg/dL	Borderline High
	160 to 189 mg/dL	High
190 mg/dL and above	Very High	
<b>HDL (“Good”) Cholesterol</b>	<b>50 mg/dL or higher</b>	
Triglycerides	<150 mg/dL	

## Tips for managing cholesterol

- As people get older, gain excess weight or both, their triglyceride levels tend to rise.
- By eating more foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and high in fiber, you have the power to reduce your cholesterol
- Following the American Heart Association’s guidelines for at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week can help manage your cholesterol levels.

# PREVENTING AND MANAGING DIABETES

**Diabetes is a major risk factor for stroke and heart disease. Compared to women without diabetes, women with diabetes have two to four times higher death rates from heart disease. Many people with diabetes also have high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol. This increases their risk even more.**

Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose, or sugar, for our bodies to use for energy. The pancreas, an organ near the stomach, makes a hormone called insulin to help glucose get into our bodies' cells. People with diabetes have a fasting blood glucose of 126 mg/dL or more. Prediabetes is a condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal (a fasting blood glucose level between 100 and 125 mg/dL) but not yet diabetic. A family history of diabetes can significantly increase the risk of developing diabetes. Untreated diabetes can lead to many serious medical problems like blindness, kidney disease, nerve disease, limb amputations and heart disease. If you have diabetes, it's very important to have regular checkups and work closely with your healthcare provider to manage your diabetes and reduce any other risk factors.

## Groups at Risk

Scientific research funded by the American Heart Association has shown that people in several ethnic groups seem to be more likely to develop type 2 diabetes:

- Hispanics
- African-Americans
- Native Americans
- Asians (especially South Asians)

## Tips for preventing and managing diabetes

- You have the power to control your weight and blood cholesterol with a low-saturated fat, low-cholesterol diet.
- You need to get a baseline of your fasting glucose by the time you're 45, and may be required to test it more often if you are pregnant, overweight, diabetic or at risk for becoming diabetic.
- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke. People who have type 2 diabetes and smoke are three times more likely to die of cardiovascular disease than nonsmokers.



**Learn more about cholesterol and heart disease at [GoRedForWomen.org](http://GoRedForWomen.org)**

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# SIGNS OF A HEART ATTACK OR STROKE

More women die of cardiovascular disease than from the next four causes of death combined, including all forms of cancer. But 80 percent of cardiac events in women could be prevented if women made the right choices for their hearts involving diet, exercise and abstinence from smoking.

## Heart Attack

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A heart attack occurs when the blood flow to a part of the heart is blocked, usually by a blood clot. If this clot cuts off the blood flow completely, the part of the heart muscle supplied by that artery begins to die.

### Signs of a Heart Attack

1. Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.
2. Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
3. Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
4. Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.
5. As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

**If you have any of these signs, don't wait more than five minutes before calling for help. Call 9-1-1. Get to a hospital right away.**

## Stroke

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Stroke is the No. 3 cause of death in America. It's also a major cause of severe, long-term disability. Stroke and transient ischemic attack (TIA) happen when a blood vessel feeding the brain gets clogged or bursts. The signs of a TIA are like a stroke, but usually last only a few minutes. If you have any of these signs, don't wait more than five minutes before calling for help. Call 9-1-1 to get help fast if you have any of these, but remember that not all of these warning signs occur in every stroke.

### Signs of Stroke and TIAs

1. Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
2. Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
3. Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
4. Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
5. Sudden severe headache with no known cause

Also, check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared. It's very important to take immediate action. Research funded by the American Heart Association has shown that if given within three hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug can reduce long-term disability for the most common type of stroke.



just a  
"LITTLE"  
**heart**  
attack

Watch *Just a Little Heart Attack*, a short film by Elizabeth Banks that was made to educate women about the realities of heart disease at [YouTube.com/GoRedForWomen](https://www.youtube.com/GoRedForWomen).

# HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Many people mistakenly believe that high blood pressure is more common among men. The truth is nearly half of all adults with high blood pressure are women. Having high blood pressure increases your risk of heart disease, the No. 1 killer of women.

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, but it raises the risk of stroke, heart attack, heart failure and kidney failure. It truly is a “silent killer.” No one knows exactly what causes most cases of high blood pressure. It usually can’t be cured, but it can be managed. Not treating high blood pressure is dangerous. Make it your mission to fight heart disease by treating and controlling high blood pressure.

## Groups at Risk

Science funded by the American Heart Association has shown that some people are at higher risk of having high blood pressure. They include:

- People with close blood relatives who have high blood pressure.
- African-Americans
- People over age 35
- Overweight people
- People who aren’t physically active
- People who use too much salt
- People who drink too much alcohol
- People with diabetes, gout or kidney disease
- Pregnant women
- Women who take birth control pills and who are overweight, had high blood pressure during pregnancy, have a family history of high blood pressure or have mild kidney disease

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic mm Hg (upper #)		Diastolic mm Hg (lower #)
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80
Prehypertension	120-139	or	80-89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	140-159	or	90-99
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	160 and higher	or	100 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (Emergency care needed)	Higher than 180	or	Higher than 110

## Tips For Healthy Blood Pressure

- Eating right is key to preventing and managing high blood pressure, so watch the salt. Follow the American Heart Association’s recommendation to keep your sodium intake to 1,500 mg or less each day.
- Avoid stress by finding ways to control your thoughts such as yoga, walking or meditation.
- If you drink, limit alcohol. Keep in mind that for women, moderate drinking is no more than one drink per day.



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# BE ACTIVE

Finding time in our overscheduled lives for physical activity is a challenge for all busy Americans. But anyone who has successfully managed to do so will tell you how much more energy they have, and how they are actually able to do more than before they started getting regular exercise. So no more excuses! Make It Your Mission to fight heart disease by being active.

## Why be physically active?

The facts are clear: By getting at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week you can reduce your risk of heart disease. Without regular physical activity, the body slowly loses its strength and ability to function well.

Being active is as important as reducing calories in helping you lose weight! And it's good for your heart, lungs, bones, muscles and mind. Regular physical activity helps lower your risk of heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure and other health problems. Ask your doctor or health professional for a physical activity plan that's right for you.

## Tips to help you be active

- Schedule time in your day for physical activity. Make a date to walk during your lunch time at work, or go for a walk with your friends or family in the evening.
- Substitute physical activity where possible. Choose a parking spot that allows you to get a few extra minutes of walking, or take the stairs instead of the elevator. Every little bit helps!
- Pick active outings. Instead of going to the movies, visit a zoo or museum where you can walk around while being entertained.

# BODY MASS INDEX

About 145 million American adults are overweight. Of these, more than 74 million are considered obese. Women who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke, even if they are young or have no family history of heart disease.

Obesity is unhealthy because excess weight puts more strain on your heart. It can raise blood pressure and blood cholesterol and can lead to diabetes. Losing weight is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of heart problems and other diseases.

## What's the big deal about BMI?

BMI is a good indicator of whether you're at a healthy or unhealthy weight. To calculate your BMI, the American Heart Association recommends that you multiply your weight in pounds by 703, divide by your height in inches, then divide again by your height in inches. Once you have your BMI, use the descriptions below to determine which weight category applies to you.

- **BMI less than 18.5 = underweight**
- **BMI 18.5 to 24.9 = healthy weight**
- **BMI 25 to 29.9 = overweight**
- **BMI 30 or higher = obese**

## Tips for losing weight

- Set goals, think ahead to potential roadblocks and decide how to deal with problems.
- Avoid fad diets, starving yourself or trying to lose weight too fast.
- Start by changing your eating habits, and make sure the number of calories you consume is less than the number of calories you burn.
- Meet the minimum level of physical activity; get at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week.

# HEALTHY EATING

A healthy diet and lifestyle are some of your best weapons to fight cardiovascular disease. However, there are a lot of mixed messages and myths out there regarding healthy eating. With all the differing opinions, it's best to get informed from credible sources, so you can make smart choices about your diet. It's the overall pattern of your choices that counts most – think nutrition.

Nutrient-rich foods have vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients, but are lower in calories. The American Heart Association recommends that you eat a wide variety of nutritious foods daily.

## American Heart Association's components of a healthy diet

1. Vegetables and fruits are high in vitamins, minerals and fiber – and they're low in calories. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables may help you control your weight and blood pressure.
2. Unrefined whole-grain foods contain fiber that can help lower your blood cholesterol and help you feel full, which may help you manage your weight.
3. Eat fish at least twice a week. Recent research shows that eating oily fish containing omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, trout and herring) may help lower your risk of death from coronary artery disease.
4. Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce trans fat in your diet. Aim to eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol each day. Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Aim to eat less than 1,500 milligrams of sodium per day.
5. Keep your intake of sugar-sweetened beverages to less than 36 oz per week.

## Tips for a healthy diet

- Eat slowly, take smaller portions and avoid “seconds.”
- Cook foods in ways that do not add fat, like baking, boiling, broiling, grilling, roasting or stewing.
- When you really crave a high-calorie food, eat a small amount and forget about it, instead of resisting until you give in and gorge. If you don't trust yourself with just a little, don't eat any at all.
- Keep saturated fat to less than 7 percent of energy; use red meat sparingly and choose lean or extra-lean cuts.

**Get heart-healthy approved recipes at [GoRedForWomen.org](http://GoRedForWomen.org)**



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# STOP SMOKING

Smoking is the most preventable major risk factor of our No. 1 killer – heart and blood vessel diseases. The long list of diseases and deaths due to smoking is frightening. Thousands of nonsmokers, including infants and children, are harmed by exposure to cigarette smoke. Even if you don't smoke, you could become one of the nearly 443,000 smoking-related deaths every year.

## Quitting

It's never too late to quit! No matter how much or how long you've smoked or when you quit smoking, your risk of heart disease and stroke starts to drop. In time your risk will be about the same as if you'd never smoked.

## Tips for quitting

- **Be prepared.** Women are more likely to quit smoking for good if they prepare for two things: 1) the last cigarette and 2) the cravings, urges and feelings that come with quitting.
- **Medication can help.** Specific medicines can help people quit smoking when used correctly. Talk to your healthcare provider about the options that may work best for you.
- **Get support.** It can help to recruit a support team. Additional support can be found by looking for programs through hospitals, the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association or the American Lung Association.

During the quitting process, people often slip and have a cigarette. It's important not to feel like you failed at quitting; just give it another chance. If you are a parent, talk to your kids about smoking. Once they start, it can be difficult to stop, even during adolescence.



Learn more about cholesterol and heart disease at [GoRedForWomen.org](https://www.GoRedForWomen.org)



# KNOW THE FACTS SELF TEST

Heart disease is still the No. 1 killer of women, taking the life of 1 in 3 women each year. This means women are dying at the rate of one per minute. It simply does not have to be that way. But only 1 in 5 women believe heart disease is her greatest health threat. The questions and answers below are from science funded by the American Heart Association. Share them with employees, friends and family.

- Over \_\_\_\_\_ million American adults have one or more cardiovascular diseases.
- Every \_\_\_\_\_ seconds, someone dies from heart and blood vessel diseases, America's No. 1 killer.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ occurs when the blood flow to a part of the heart is blocked, usually by a blood clot.
- If a clot blocks an artery that feeds the heart, it causes a \_\_\_\_\_.
- If a clot blocks an artery that feeds the brain, it causes a \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_ percent of cardiac events in women could be prevented if women made the right choices for their hearts involving diet, exercise and abstinence from smoking.
- Most of the food we eat is turned into \_\_\_\_\_, or sugar, for our bodies to use for energy.
- \_\_\_\_\_, or juvenile diabetes, usually starts early in life. It results from the body's failure to produce insulin.
- About \_\_\_\_ percent of American adults have cholesterol levels that are too high.
- About 90 to 95 percent of Americans diagnosed with diabetes have \_\_\_\_\_ diabetes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls.
- High blood pressure (or \_\_\_\_\_) makes the heart work harder than normal.
- As a woman, you have an increased risk of developing high blood pressure if you are \_\_\_\_\_ pounds or more over a healthy weight.
- Cholesterol builds up with other substances in the inner walls of arteries and becomes \_\_\_\_\_.
- Plaques that rupture can cause \_\_\_\_\_ that can totally block blood flow in the artery.

## Answers

1. 81
2. 38
3. Heart attack
4. Heart attack
5. Stroke
6. 80
7. Glucose
8. Type 1
9. 47
10. Type 2
11. Blood pressure
12. Hypertension
13. 20
14. Plaque
15. Blood clots

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