

Small changes your heart will love

You may know the basics of heart health that include a healthy diet, exercise, healthy weight, and avoiding tobacco. But, don't let these major goals overwhelm you. Instead, take small steps each day that add up to big heart-healthy benefits.



Say bye-bye to beige and eat the rainbow.

Look at your plate's color before you eat a meal. If it's mostly browns, such as breads, pasta and meat, see if you can brighten it up with fruits and vegetables. Leafy greens, yellow peppers, carrots, blueberries and strawberries are just a few of the brightly colored foods that are great for your heart.



Cut back on sodium when you can.

If you've been eating salt for years, it can be hard to cut it out completely. But you may not taste the difference if you gradually replace some of the salt in your diet with herbs and spices without sodium. Cutting back on sodium can reduce your risk of heart attack, heart failure, and stroke. Many processed foods already contain high amounts of sodium, and adding salt to food greatly increases sodium intake for many people.



Walk, if you can't run.

For many people, jogging, running, or other high-intensity workouts aren't possible. Fortunately, you don't have to choose a tough workout to get heart benefits. Start walking just a few minutes a day. Increase the amount of time you walk when you can until you are walking 30 minutes a day most days of the week. Brisk walking can be just as beneficial to your heart as running.



If you use tobacco, keep trying to quit.

Quitting tobacco is hard, and many people struggle to succeed. You may have strong urges to use tobacco or you may slip up and start again after you've quit. When this happens, be patient with yourself. Understand that many people have to quit several times before they've quit for good. When you quit, your heart – and your entire body – will start to heal. You'll reduce your risk of heart disease, lung cancer, and many other serious diseases. Talk with your health care provider about prescription medication or nicotine replacement therapy. Many of these treatments are now covered by insurance.

Source: American Heart Association