

# SHARE THE WELLNESS TIP



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## Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease



A list of well-recognized factors are known to boost your risk for heart disease. These include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity and smoking. But these don't explain all cases of heart disease. There's another list of less familiar factors that also may contribute to heart problems. You can avoid some of these and possibly protect your heart. Here's how:

**Get your ZZZs.** In a study of more than 70,000 women, those who slept five or fewer hours a night had a 39 percent higher risk for heart disease, compared with women who slept eight hours per night.

**Tame your stress levels, and keep a cool head.** Mental stress contributes to high blood pressure; it also can trigger heart attacks. How we handle stress also counts. In particular, reacting with hostility and anger seems to increase heart risks.

**Steer clear of secondhand smoke.** Even if you're not a smoker, breathing smoky air still harms your heart. Nonsmokers in one study who were regularly exposed to secondhand smoke had a 99 percent higher risk of having a heart attack or unstable angina.

**Don't disregard a thick middle.** Carrying extra weight around your abdomen has been linked to high blood pressure and lower levels of good (HDL) cholesterol.

**Don't skip health screenings.** Starting at age 20, visit your doctor for heart-health screenings. Some of the screenings you may receive include checking your blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, and body mass index (BMI).

If your doctor finds you have a problem, such as high blood pressure, he or she will recommend steps you can take to manage it before you develop more serious issues. These steps may include a combination of diet and lifestyle changes as well as medications, such as those to control your blood pressure or cholesterol levels, if necessary. How often you need to follow up with your physician depends on your risk factors and overall health.

If you haven't visited your doctor for a cardiovascular screening yet, make an appointment today.

**Sources:** World Heart Federation; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention